THE TOWN LANDING

MABEL FARNUM

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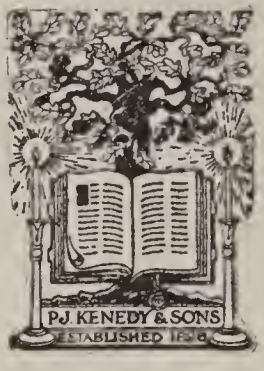
THE TOWN LANDING

BY

MABEL FARNUM



NEW YORK

P. J. KENEDY & SONS

1923

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JAN 10 '24

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THE TOWN LANDING

I

A FACE IN THE LAMPLIGHT

"HEY, mister; give us a shot?" Without waiting for the desired permission the small urchin astride the iron fence that separated the Old Granary Burying Grounds from the busy thoroughfare of Tremont Street directed an apple core with professional curve at his chosen target, one of two young men who were walking slowly along in the quiet of early evening.

"Look here, young chap! If I wanted to soil my hands with you . . ." The irate and fastidious Dr. Francis Somers wiped the remains of the none too wholesome apple from his coat collar and lifted his walking stick vengefully in the direction of—nothing more than the aforementioned iron fence.

"Where did the rascal go, anyhow? I've a good mind to jump over that fence and catch him and——"

"Oh, come on! What good would it do? Poor little beggar! It's just his way of expressing himself, that's all." And George Barrows, the doctor's genial companion, swung him by the arm into a livelier pace as they passed on their way toward the Common.

"If I had caught him," muttered Francis, whose immaculate attire had suffered somewhat from the encounter, "I would have—— Expression! I'd give him something expressive."

"But, my dear fellow," responded Barrows, "you've added somewhat to the joy of living for that little urchin. From the looks of him he hasn't too much of it. I imagine that he lives somewhere in the West End and just came up here for excitement and to see what's going on. You see, he wasn't exactly looking for anything particular. Just something by way of diversion. Your appearance seemed to strike him. You know, you're rather well put together, if you don't mind my saying so, Francis. I don't wonder sick folks usually manage to have a long convalescence under your tender treatment. I'd say that this little shaver showed discrimination when he picked you from the crowd. Now, honestly — you know you're unusual, don't you?"

"Oh, come now, George!" But Francis was

mollified by the compliment. "What do you say to a stroll along the Esplanade? It's a wonderful night. We can cut across Beacon Street. By the way, I don't know but there is something in what you said about expressing one's self. We all have to find a way. Of course, the little chap . . ."

The two friends continued on their way, chatting pleasantly. They passed through River Street, turned the corner by the little antique shop, and were swinging toward the river when Francis noticed a small boy vainly endeavoring to reach the doorbell of a red brick apartment.

"Hi, mister! Please ring the bell for me? I ain't quite tall enough."

Dr. Somers, edified that he seemed to be the favorite picked every time for the bestowal of delicate attentions on the part of small urchins, strode lightly up the steps and pulled the bell benignantly.

"Hoorah! Now yuh better run for dear life, mister. I don't want anything. I'm just around ringin' doorbells."

As the generous peal reverberated through the quiet street sundry heads appeared in adjacent doorways and windows. Francis colored and bit his lip with annoyance.

"Did you say—expression?" he asked as he

stood on the doorstep looking blankly around for a glimpse of the small boy, who had disappeared as if by magic.

"You wished to see someone in the house, sir?" A very charming young person had appeared in answer to the summons and stood waiting for Dr. Somers to proffer an explanation.

"Why—why—" The young person was certainly very attractive, and for the moment she quite took all thought of the doorbell from Francis' mind. Fortunately his friend came to the rescue.

"You see, we just made a mistake, that's all," he explained with tactful courtesy. "We are not familiar with the neighborhood. It's a beautiful evening, isn't it? Nice locality this, near the river. Thank you."

The young person looked as if she was only too willing to pardon a mistake made by such very agreeable young men, and with evident regret written all over her pretty face suffered them to depart.

Francis was silent for a few moments. His companion said:

"Just another form of expression, that."

"Eh? What? Yes, I'll say her expression was —was——"

"Was—what?" suggested George, inwardly

amused by the evident trend of Francis' thoughts.

"Was—well, you know what I mean, or if you don't you are a mole or an ostrich. She was very soothing to the eyes, that's all."

"Ah! Now I understand. Yes. And she evidently has discrimination, too. It was plain to see that she was willing to pardon your mistake."

Francis colored again and changed the subject abruptly.

The two friends walked arm in arm along the Esplanade. It was too early in the season to tempt many pedestrians to face the brisk east winds. Only now and then a solitary figure huddled in a warm wrap passed them.

In the early evening the water looked cruel. A sheet of seething cold gray steel, it lapped greedily at the huge stone piers. The lifeboats were as yet swathed in their winter coverings, and the tiny teahouse over the way was tightly barred and boarded until the summer season. And yet Nature was appealing even in her stern and aggressive mood.

To the left of the Esplanade stretched an unending chain of red brick apartments, the homes of privileged children of fortune. Most of these dwellings, glimpsed from the rear, were enclosed

by high brick walls over which, a little later, all kinds of fragrant growths would twine in beauteous profusion. They stretched away as far as the eye could see. Directly across the glittering water, to the right, was the bridge over which passed a ceaseless stream of vehicles of every description, drays, trams, railway cars and automobiles—going to and from the city. In the distance they looked like a train of toys which a child strews about the floor, and moves about to suit his fancy.

Directly in front, where the gray river melted into the horizon, against the far blue hills of cloud, rose the red tiled roofs of the Passionist Monastery, its white cloisters standing out in picturesque relief against the opalescent sky. The sight suggested something very soothing, not alone to the eye, but to the soul of George Barrows, who was a fervent Catholic. He lifted his hat, and his lips moved for an instant.

Doctor Somers, whose sensitive soul keenly appreciated beauty, although he was not a religious man, looked toward the peaceful outline of the monastery roof, and sighed deeply, while a dreamy expression crept into his fine eyes.

He said: "It's certainly good to leave the madding throng for a brief hour and to steal away like this. Tennyson must have felt that

way, I think, from certain passages in the 'Idylls of the King.' I imagine that he, like many others, longed to escape from the incessant motion of the world and people in it, to steal away 'to where, beyond these voices, there is peace.' I sometimes wish that I were away from it all. It's really getting on my nerves. The craze for speed seems to be an insatiable weakness of men to-day. I hate the streets—although, of course, I love my work. There's a lot of happiness to be found in helping other people, especially those in pain."

"To express themselves?" suggested Barrows with a smile.

"Well, then, yes. If there were not something more than the mere easing of physical pains, I'd be sick of it, I imagine. But when you connect this intricate machinery with the motive power, and watch it when it begins to work smoothly and give off steam, so to speak, there's something behind it that makes it absorbing. It's the soul of the thing, I suppose."

The two men passed back through the congested streets of the West End and turning abruptly around by McLean Street, came upon old St. Joseph's Church nestling on the corner with its peaceful and friendly outline, solitary and inviting.

"If you don't mind going on alone, I guess 'll drop in here for a while," George Barrows said. "Or, if you'd like to, come in and wait. No? Well, then, I'll see you to-morrow night."

Doctor Somers, continuing on his way, thought seriously of his friend's action in stopping to enter the quiet and apparently abandoned church.

"I wonder what he wanted in there at this time of the day," he soliloquized. "Because there's nobody there."

It was twilight when Francis reached his apartment on Bowdoin Street just across from the State House. He stood for a few moments in the open doorway before entering. It was a still evening, indicative of the near advent of May and the first breath of flowers.

Noises of the city were subdued at the moment: the far-off wail of an engine, factory whistles, cries of children playing late in the streets, discordant and merry, languid voices of old men discussing the day's affairs over the evening pipe in doorways, soft tones of women exchanging bits of news from upper-story windows, hoarse shouts of venders about to lay aside their wares for the morrow, all these betokened a murmuring of life beyond the confines of the

narrow street, but mellowed as the hum of bees in some quiet Old World garden.

A whiff of salt air drifted from the distant wharves to the westward, stinging the nostrils of the young man. He was vaguely cognizant of the fact that somewhere, up among the attics, a girl was singing, sweetly, pensively:

"In the gloaming, O my darling,
Think not bitterly of me. . ."

Francis wondered whether the words of the song meant anything in particular to the singer; whether she, early in life, had experienced anything of the bitterness of this brief exile which men called living, but which Francis, not having ever heard of the great Mystics, Teresa or John of the Cross, sometimes felt to be a dying life.

The words of the old sweet song lay gently on his spirit, a little saddened since he had parted with his friend at the door of the old church in the West End. There were times of late when Francis dreaded to be left alone with his thoughts. Not even his loved profession, the constant reminders of home and an adoring mother, his growing professional prestige, his youth and splendid young manhood could console him for the lack of something—what was it? —that was missing.

Slowly the flush died out on the pavements. A silver crescent of moon, like a shy maiden, peeped adroitly out among a handful of stars. Bells began to call to one another from church steeples. As Francis listened pensively, a soft light crept into his face. He recalled through these sweet tones the bells of his native village. As a boy he had often heard them calling on still evenings, floating over the fallow pasture lands and losing themselves in a deep rich silence.

In spirit his heart leaped to meet the loved image recalled by these dulcet notes—his mother. For evening is the time when men's minds turn homeward by instinct. At the end of fevered hours, when for a time business cares and the endless chain of petty distractions are a little removed in distance, then, out of the silence and the sunset, from the deep throat of a church bell, a man's soul or his good angel speaks to him. Then if ever he listens.

So Francis, standing in the doorway, saw in spirit his old home town, its quaint and graceful streets overhung by ancient trees, its fields and rustic bridges, its woods and rills, its meadow flowers, its dear and familiar faces. Nothing was changed in any way, but all were faithful to his memory of them and the time when he had walked among them, a carefree lad. He was

glad to-night that no blot or stain had ever defaced their perfect beauty, that this memory at least was pure and peaceful.

Francis looked down the street that was now commencing to grow dusky. The bells had ceased to call, and the children's voices were silent. Night sounds burst softly on the air. Footsteps died away, and street lamps blinked in friendly fashion at one another from their respective corners.

Francis was suddenly arrested by a face in the lamplight. It was that of a young girl. She passed beneath the doorway where he stood, and as she passed, suddenly she raised her eyes and met his own fixed steadily on her. She instantly withdrew her gaze and passed on. She was gone. He had caught but a fleeting glimpse of her face, but in that brief instant he had recognized something. What was it? Perhaps a kindred spirit. But he never dreamed that he would see her again.

An hour later Francis threw aside the *Saturday Evening Post* and yawned. He rose, took a decisive turn about the room, and finally moved over to the piano. His fine tenor took up the refrain of his favorite Ave Maria, by Percy Kahn, dedicated to one who, a prince among the golden-voiced of earth, had passed into the Great

Silence: "Ave Maria—gratia plena—Dominus tecum—benedicta tu——"

With singular, passionate tenderness the fine rich notes fell on the silence of the little room. Francis called upon her whom he did not know as a mother. And then the fortissimo: "Sancta Maria—ora pro nobis——" There was almost a cry of despair in the petition to the Mother of Mercies as the beautiful measures rose and fell.

The mood passed. Francis rose from the instrument and flung himself into the depths of an armchair.

The hours passed.

"I wonder," he said, pensively, as the clock struck the hour of midnight, "what Barrows wanted in the church when there was nobody there. Strange old chap! Can't quite make him out sometimes."

II

MRS. TOMER'S BOARDING HOUSE

"IT'S a cold world," said the tall, lank and hungry-eyed man at the end of the table, helping himself unconsciously to his neighbor's butter. The tall hungry-eyed man was notoriously absent-minded, but no one took offense at his idiosyncrasies.

He drove milk teams and only appeared at the common table for the evening meal. He should have had his own table and been surrounded by a merry, noisy, affectionate group of his own children, for he was a lonely and affectionate soul. But his day had slipped by, bringing middle age. He had been the sole support of a widowed mother until her death, and had also contributed to the upkeep of a group of small nieces and nephews in the disability or disinclination of their father to do so. The old mother was now laid away. The nieces and nephews were able to do for themselves, and never so much as sent him a card at Christmas or Easter. He had a faint suspicion that they were ashamed

of him, for they had all obtained good positions, and moved in "society." Just what this society comprised the tall hungry-souled uncle never pretended to know. But it represented something too exalted for association with milk cans and back stoops, where you sneaked softly up at four A.M. and were sometimes rewarded by the throwing of an old shoe if you happened to make a noise.

"Yes, 'tis," responded the tall man's neighbor on the right, jabbing viciously and hopelessly at a piece of very tough steak. "Yes, 'tis cold! Yes, 'tis tough!" He might have meant the steak, but he referred to the world. "Nobody's got time to do a kind turn to anyone else. We're too darn busy, that's it. The world's going too fast. You've got to keep up or be left behind."

He resigned the steak with woeful countenance, and took a gulp out of a huge mug of tea. Table manners were not a strong institution at Mrs. Tomer's boarding house, although kind hearts a-plenty assembled around the meager board, hopefully expectant of the better things which failed to come.

"Yes, it's cold, 'n it's tough, all right," assented the man on the tall hungry man's left. "Now there's old lady Smithers that lives down in Rutland Square. She's a good old soul and

lives all alone. I guess she's fixed so's she can just about squeeze a little sugar into her tea, and that's about all. Who cares for her? Why, the old lady was waiting for a letter that should have come at Christmas or thereabouts. I knew it wouldn't come, and so I just couldn't bear to disappoint her."

"And you wrote one yourself and sent it, didn't you, Abie?" shrieked the chorus around the table. They were rather proud of Abie's philanthropies and felt that they added a certain dignity to the establishment which even tough steak and very weak tea could not dissipate.

"Well, yes, I wrote her one myself. And believe me, boys, and begging your pardon, ladies, I was more than repaid by the pleasure that it gave her. I got a card at the five and ten. If only I had money, I'd——"

Visions of what Abie would do if he had money faded suddenly when the door opened and a tall slim girl appeared, her face somewhat flushed and weary from apparent fatigue, her dark curls bewitchingly disordered.

"It's Barby," screamed the chorus.

There was silence for a moment while the girl, Barbara, slipped into her place between little Miss Graham, a seamstress, and Mrs. Tomer's oldest girl, a tall freckled-faced child who rarely spoke,

but listened eagerly to all that went on in this charmed circle. Minnie was trying to make up her little mind as to whether she would be a lady postmistress or owner of a milk depot or a fashionable model such as Miss Graham sometimes showed her in the fashion sheets. But she thought that she would wait and see what Barby chose before coming to a definite decision. Barby was everyone's sunshine and everyone's heroine.

The little circle was strangely silent. A sort of depression rested over it. They all loved Barby, who was always ready to listen or to sympathize in their little joys and sorrows. She was infinitely superior to her surroundings. But Barby had been out of work when she came to the boarding house two months before, and save for occasional jobs of a few days at a time addressing envelopes at the Mailing Company, she had so far been unsuccessful in finding it. It was a very bad time to be stranded in a big city. Barby had told them that she came from New York State. She was an orphan—that was all they knew about her history. No one ventured to intrude on her secret if she had one. Yes, it was a very unpropitious time to be looking for work. No wonder that the faithful allies at Mrs. Tomer's looked troubled.

"I've been trying again all day to find some-

thing," Barby explained, attacking the hash with that hearty appetite which can soon dissipate girlish sorrow. "Really, you don't know how many interesting experiences one gets looking for work. Nobody has the least interest in you under those conditions. And then, too, if you happen to know that your shoes are run down at the heels and your suit is shiny, it doesn't increase confidence."

After a silence she went on. "The least people can do for you, and sometimes the most, is to be sorry for you. Well, I tried a Domestic Bureau. It was in charge of a frail nervous little lady. And oh, what do you think? Her one ambition in life is to have someone write a story about her. Isn't it odd? Poor creature! Her quaint little shop with the cretonne and the canary birds makes you think of an artist's studio. But she's not an impossible heroine. I'm not sure she would not make a wonderful novel.

"Well, she didn't have anything. Mrs. Somebody wanted a maid to tend her pet Pomeranian. Fancy! Somebody else wanted a companion for travel, but I was just too late for that. Somebody else had just been there and taken off the prize. I'd rather be in a factory than cooped up dusting bric-a-brac and wearing a uniform. 'Tisn't pride, but I couldn't stand it——"

The company about the table straightened, and Abie lifted a hopeful countenance from behind a huge basket of gingerbread. Barby was wonderful. She still had so much spirit, which no misfortune could quite consume.

Mrs. Tomer bustled in with dessert just then. Faces looked hopeful for a moment, then dropped as suddenly. It was vanilla corn starch again, much lacking in vanilla, and much watered.

But they attacked it vigorously. Barbara seemed to make the best of everything. She ate with evident relish, for it was good to know that she still had sufficient money in her purse to purchase the necessities of life.

Then, just as the dishes were being carried away, the landlady, her face sagging a bit at the sides appeared and made her little announcement.

"It's really too bad, ladies and gentlemen, and I hate to do it. But I shall be obliged to raise the board fifty cents per week from this time on. It's the price of spinach and potatoes and the common things that does it. I'm awfully sorry."

Barbara felt a sort of stab at her heart. Everything seemed to go against her. . . . They left the table, a rather subdued little group. They knew that Mrs. Tomer could not help it.

Who could? Ah, therein lay the mystery. Who was to blame for the high cost of living, the mysterious ascent in the price of certain things? Who was to blame for the extortion in certain avenues of buying? They wished to know, for these persons were alone responsible for the many heartaches, the bitter and weary burden and the almost hopelessness of the poor. But nobody knew just who was to blame. In this strange way Providence gave them a chance to practice submission and patience.

Barbara wearily ascended the two flights of stairs which led to her little attic room, and closed the door after her with a heavy sigh of relief. She sat down upon the small white iron cot and brushed back the rich dark curls that hung in profusion over her brow. Her face was not beautiful; her features were certainly not classical. But there was a sort of sunshine lurking at the corners of her mouth, a mouth meant for laughter, and a suspicion of mischief in the large gray eyes whose depths seemed to veil but poorly a mind unusually vigorous and understanding.

The room was certainly not artistic, although Barbara's efforts had tried to make it so. She looked up. The ceiling was unprepossessing to begin with. The kalsomine was beginning to

chip off in places, and there were several great ugly spots where the rain had filtered through. In the center was an ugly blotch, with the foundation for electric fixtures never utilized. The picture moulding was struggling unevenly, striving to part company with the wall paper, and the latter had received some generous splashes of whitewash in the long ago. The floor was uneven, painted a dull red by the girl's clever fingers after she had laboriously filled in the huge cracks with putty. Mrs. Tomer had provided the paint, but the cost of labor was too great to permit of having the poor place newly decorated. If Barbara wanted to do it herself of an evening. . . .

Barbara wanted to and did, for she loved beauty and hated ugliness. Of course the floor was made brighter and more sanitary. But it was still far from satisfactory, for in places it humped like a camel's back, and the rough nails stood out here and there to challenge the tips of your shoes if you were not mindful of them.

The small white iron bed was good enough in its way, and Barbara had no quarrel with it. Nor with the neat washstand and plain bureau, which latter she had adorned with a few girlish trifles. It boasted a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, her most cherished possession, painted white and

blue, with pure, sweet countenance and hands folded.

Barbara, regarding the loved image to-night, bit her lip and struggled to keep back temptation, knowing that success or failure in the eyes of the world were all one with God so long as a soul followed faithfully His divine inspirations.

On the table were a few choice books. The girl ran her quick eye over the titles as they ranged in neat row: The Life of St. John Berchmans, by Father Goldie, S. J., The New Testament, The Psalms, Abandonment to Divine Providence, by Father Caussade, and a few others.

Feeling the need of some comforting word, she took up Abandonment, and, opening at chance, read hungrily:

"The garden of souls resembles no other, for among the flowers there are no two alike, except in the fidelity with which they respond to the action of the Creator in leaving Him free to do as He pleases. Let God act, and let us do what He requires of us. . . ."

Barbara closed the book. She felt strangely soothed and happier. What a blessed thing it was that, when you were far removed from the consoling voice of a loved friend and guide, when

things looked dark and in the distance little rumbles of thunder reverberated over your soul, and the sun seemed to sink into the horizon where lurked the storm, you might at almost any moment summon up some quiet echoes of a voice speaking in the still depths of your heart. . . .

And now the voice of a holy monk, dead for centuries, spoke to the weary and storm-tossed soul of Barbara in her poor little attic, as it had often spoken amid the vicarious happenings of everyday life in the midst of the world. In the long years of preparation in religious life this holy man had learned through inexpressible weariness and pains of soul and body what all elect souls must suffer, that only in perfect conformity to the Divine Will or in Holy Abandonment can peace be found. Barbara was singularly interested in the letters of this holy man appended to the little book, most of them written to nuns. She had been somewhat surprised to learn that these elect souls sometimes, as St. Teresa, suffered interior trials most grievous—even in such happy abodes. It was, then, true that the Divine Spouse willed sacrifice and that He loved it beyond all price.

"It's all right, dear Lord," whispered the girl as she lifted a shining face to the little crucifix above her bed. "I leave all to you. I'm through

fussing and disappointing you. It's got to come right, somehow."

Barbara thought that the crown of thorns appeared to rest very lightly on the beautiful brow of Christ. She loved Him with all the ardor of an affectionate and innocent nature. If in the interior life there were dark desolations, was it not all worth a moment of union like that which she experienced now?

Barbara was a natural girl. She hoped some day, like most other girls, that her prince would come and snatch her off on a fiery charger to a lovely castle where she would live "forever and ever happy after," as the story books said. Barbara relied on the sometime advent of the prince, and even told her Best Friend about her desires in the matter of hair, eyes and sundry other attributes. Of His heartfelt interest she felt sure, for had He not on earth gone about the common ways of men? He had not isolated Himself in the sacred precincts of the Temple, but He had walked about with His friends, entering their homes; He had followed a funeral train and sat at a marriage feast. So Barbara knew that His human heart was throbbing with tense interest for all her little fancies, and that nothing was too small to pour into the abyss of His Divine Heart.

Barbara took off her shoes slowly to-night. She found a quiet humor, in her present frame of mind, in the fact that they were in so dilapidated a state. She dared not venture on another pair until she felt certain of obtaining work. In the morning she meant to scan the advertising columns of the papers again.

Drip, drip on the roof just over her head, the raindrops began to fall. To others they might have a dreary sound. To Barbara they were friendly. The rain bespoke the munificence of God, who sent it to refresh the torrid earth. It gently nourished with its grateful moisture thousands of little seeds covered over in the soft bosom of the soil. It was sipped up eagerly by the roots of the trees just beginning to sprout into tiny green shoots. The sound of the rain was very friendly to-night.

Drip, drip on the eaves it fell. Barbara, lying awake for a few moments thought in particular of a young man who had brushed hastily past her in the hall of the building where she had gone to visit the Domestic Bureau. He had turned to apologize for his act. She recalled the soft rich tones of his voice, almost like music—she had hardly seen his face——

She recalled that he had carried a small black leather bag in his hand, and that he had jumped

into a car waiting outside the door, and driven away.

Then she fell asleep and dreamed that this stranger with the soft voice and the bag had suddenly changed into the Prince, and that he had come to carry her away to a fairy castle called Abandonment.

III

THE FIRST DAY OF MAY

THE first day of May. In the parks and gardens the buds were bursting eagerly and the sap ran joyously in the trunks of the trees and shrubs. A faint, far fragrance seemed to linger in these erstwhile dusty and commercial streets as if to suggest something more lovely than commerce and unceasing strife.

Barbara was an optimist by nature. She could not remain downcast for long. So she broke into a swifter pace as she turned the corner of Washington Street and came up School Street past all manner of delightful and quaint shops. Life seemed very bright to-day. She had hung for a few moments about the vicinity of Summer Street where Ralph Waldo Emerson had lived as a boy. She had just finished reading the Essay on Friendship, and pictured to herself with infinite delight the old family mansion with the garden and the fence and other familiar landmarks of the boyhood of a great literary light. Now a huge clothing establishment

flaunted its models in glass cases, and cried out to her of the swift passing of the years. She heaved a sigh, realizing that the world was strangely altered since those far-back days. Was it—had it been for the better? In all this tremendous incessant hum of business, was there more peace and content?

Before the windows of the Old Corner Bookstore Barbara paused to feast her hungry eyes on the treasures there revealed: books of travel in foreign lands, their opened covers showing delicious photogravures of ancient cities, historic bridges, ruins; biographies of men and women of whom she had often yearned to know more. Kindly genuine faces looking out at you from a maze of printed matter, exquisite editions of the old authors, the best-known and loved, the wisest and most human, always new, never old.

Barbara caught her breath in ecstasy as her eye wandered to a corner where hung several rare old colored prints from Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield. David setting off in search of his Aunt Betsy Trotwood, a little pathetic figure with mop of tumbled golden hair, having sold his waistcoat in order to defray the expenses of the journey. David with Dora, his child wife. "When you are going to be angry with me say to yourself: 'It's only my child

wife.' " David and Agnes, kindred spirits in the quaint little house. They unfolded rare delights to the heart of the girl who stood before them.

She passed on to Tremont Street. The tower of the Park Street Church was just pointing to twelve o'clock. Barbara was hungry. But it was a long time until the supper hour and she resolved to prolong the luncheon hour in order to thoroughly appease the pangs which real hunger brings in its wake.

She passed slowly by the Old Granary Burying Grounds, and paused to look through the iron fence at the leaning gray stones that marked the spot where the early settlers of the town were laid to rest. Up and down unthinking crowds hurried past them, nor even paused to bestow a thought or a prayer on the dead. It was not a Catholic cemetery, for the cross was nowhere to be seen, emblem of peace and hope to the dead and the living. The very human heart of the girl yearned toward these unknown sleepers, whose memory was withered like grass and who had disappeared as a cloud in the ether. While she and others walked up and down the streets, sometimes dejected, sometimes inexpressibly weary, but always hopeful, these dead were free from earthly obligations.

Barbara thought of Evangeline's grave beside that of Gabriel in the little cemetery of Grand-Pré, and the beautiful strains of the poet's lamentation:

In the heart of the city they lie, unknown and unnoticed.
Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them;
Thousands of throbbing hearts where theirs are at rest and forever,
Thousands of aching brains where theirs no longer are busy,
Thousands of toiling hands where theirs have ceased from their labors,
Thousands of weary feet where theirs have completed their journey.

Barbara purchased a paper at a newsstand, looking hungrily at the flowers exposed in dainty baskets for sale—May flowers, delicate pink with glossy brown leaves. A little pain rose in her soul when she remembered that she dared not buy them. She walked through the Common, where the grass was just turning green and tender. Swarms of chattering pigeons trailed greedily after her, hoping for a share of peanuts, but vainly. After following her for a few yards, they turned in search of more promising material.

The ancient elms were slowly opening their first blooms to the warm golden sunlight. They

were somewhat retarded in their development by the coldness of the spring season. Barbara tried to picture the house in which Longfellow had lived on Beacon street, facing the bright green expanse of turf and the frog pond, and where so many beautiful thoughts had come to him which he afterward wrote down for the world to read.

She crossed Charles Street and entered the Public Garden. Already the swan boats were basking in the sunshine, drying lazily after a bath of fresh white and green paint.

At the edge of the miniature pond flowing beneath two arched stone bridges and overhung by weeping willows, just opposite a tiny island of rocks and moss-covered shrubs, where numberless sparrows were spring house-cleaning Barbara sat down on a bench and unfolded the newspaper. She looked about her first, however, and noticed the figures sitting on the adjoining benches, tried to fancy which of them were out of work and suffering. It was not difficult to guess which. Poverty, privation, pain, mental or physical, brought the same weary stoop to the shoulders, the same dejection to the eyes, the same inexpressible something which was hardly analogous to prosperity.

"I've just got to do something for a while,"

she whispered to herself. "I've got to find something; that's all there is to it. Maybe I could be a governess or something like that——"

She read through the "Wanted" columns slowly. Then she brightened perceptibly.

"Wanted, girls to work on artificial flowers. Apply room number —— Summer Street."

Perhaps she would be successful in persuading those in charge of the flower shop that she was competent. She hoped so.

The streets were crowded now, with noon pedestrians passing to and fro, lunching, shopping, gazing into the shop windows, promenading. The girl shrank from them. She could not bear the sight of the gaudy windows with their expensive nothings.

She hid the bit of paper containing the address of the flower shop in her worn glove. Time and again in happier days had she glanced carelessly at the classified advertisements with their "Help Wanted," with something of a superior emotion. Situations wanted, help wanted—such subjects had never troubled her tranquil thoughts. She had never dreamed of a day to come when, weary and dispirited, she must climb flight after flight of musty stairs which creaked beneath her slender weight, peering eagerly through dingy transoms to encounter the rude gaze of those of

her own sex who, secure in their paltry positions, had scant sympathy for one whose apparent delicacy and refinement made her superior to them. Alas for the weakness of human nature! Barbara, in a few short, sad months, had learned to expect no mercy.

So now she betook herself to the address indicated on the bit of paper, stopping to refresh herself at a cafeteria with a glass of milk and a sandwich. It was becoming second nature now to scan the menus with eager gaze in order to search out the least expensive dishes; to see whether or not one might dare invest in a salad or whether one must compromise on a slim sandwich. It was but a single stone on the rough path whither the slender feet were wearily traveling.

Barbara fancied that the waitress looked attentively at her. She was uncomfortably conscious that this unknown girl of plainly inferior birth and breeding, coarse-featured, and with rudeness of accent, knew just how much small change lay in the depths of her worn leather purse. Then a saving sense of humor came to the rescue. She remembered something that a certain wise old monk had said in his age-old monastery, and she smiled bravely. After all, her sorrows were but a small part of the great universal weary burden which most of the world

had to carry day after day. She thought that perhaps some day her little miseries would make this old world, so tired and so unkind, somewhat merrier and more patient with its children.

She smiled, therefore, and looked cheerily into the face of the waitress. And strange—or was it strange?—the girl seemed to light up suddenly. Certain crude lines in her face smoothed out as if they had been ironed. Barbara wondered about the girl, whether she too had secret miseries. She could not know that the girl was the mother of two minor children and that her husband had deserted her; that she had placed the little ones in the Day Nursery that very morning ere she hastened to her post, where she shuffled to and fro carrying huge piles of dishes to patrons who rarely failed to reproach her with her lack of speed, her clumsiness and with various other things. Either the buckwheat cakes were underdone or they were overdone, or someone had plainly ordered coffee who had plainly ordered something else. Or a trying patron, feminine, had changed her mind—according to the privilege of her sex and had now decided on tea. These and other things too trivial to mention went to make up an inglorious and unprofitable day.

"What did 'Abandonment' say?" mused Bar-

bara. "Something about God's disposition of our affairs. I suppose that He sees all that happens to us, and knows how miserable life can be at times. One moment the sun is shining, and the next it's pouring. Funny old world! But after all it's very beautiful somehow!"

Through the old and tortuous streets of the city that held such historic charm in spite of its unpleasant features, the crowds jostled one another. Now and again the girl saw through plate-glass windows the absorbed faces of clerks poring over huge ledgers, and evidently musty like their books. But what a blessing work became when one was in search of it and suffering!

Number —— was an old worm-eaten building with a steep flight of stairs just within the entrance leading to the magical world of artificial flowers. Never had real flowers in all their fragrant beauty so appealed to the heart of the girl as these imaginary flowers which she had not even seen as yet. With hopes rapidly rising, Barbara climbed up, up. There were several landings and diverse dirty doorways. In the dim light, she could barely discern the inscriptions on them. At the end of one which resembled an art studio a figure in a jaded velvet cap very much on one side appraised her and cleared its throat once or twice. She did not

pause, but went up, up, half fearful that the horrid ogre in the doorway would follow her. It did not.

On the third floor Barbara found the shop where they wanted girls to work on artificial flowers. The door was closed. She knocked timidly. Receiving no response, she pushed it open and entered. When one is out of work and dependent on the world, one always proceeds timidly. Perhaps this very position, apologetic, assailable, helps to ensure positive defeat. For the world likes a bold front. Barbara dimly recognized the sad truth of it.

A row of girls in gaudy costumes were seated at long benches in the center of the room. Heaps of flowers dyed in outrageous hues toppled over everything. They littered the benches and chairs, the floor and windowsills. They were horribly unattractive and artificial.

Barbara's hopes sank swiftly. It is a relentless transition from hope to despair. Body and soul grow sick and faint on such occasions. Happiness, success, seem such far-off elusive things! You have followed them for a long, long way. At every moment you hope to catch up with them. Now you have almost gained the shadow; now your hand is nearly upon the filmy garments, when, alas, they have vanished swiftly

around a corner, and you stand defeated, dazed.

Barbara tremblingly stated her request to a huge giant with deep scowls between his brows. She thought that the man was even more unwholesome, more untidy than the surroundings.

The girls at work looked up, stopped chewing gum for an instant to regard her unfavorably. The girl nearest Barbara tossed her head scornfully and indicated to her companion that on no account would she approve of the newcomer.

"No, you wouldn't do," replied the giant with the knitted brows. "You ain't strong enough. And anyway, you ain't the kind."

Barbara escaped from the oppressive atmosphere and breathed a sigh of relief. Far better slow starvation than this. Then she laughed at her own mood. And yet our hopes, our consolations are apt to be considerably diminished when the last door of our resources is suddenly closed, leaving us on the other side.

Barbara, passing suddenly out into the warm sunlight, straightened her hat, which had nearly fallen off in her hasty exit from the unfriendly spot. She was disappointed, yes, but not hopeless, for she had youth and trust on her side, and the sacred human heart of One who had promised

that He would never break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

Back there a few nights ago, in the solitude of old St. Joseph's, Barbara had felt how good it was to throw her whole weight on Christ. There, with the red lamp casting its radiance on His wounds, His side had gleamed like a red, red rose, like a whole garden of roses. Roses of pain, love, joy, hope, with the beautiful scent of blossoms just before they die.

She wished someone was at hand to whom she could speak. Just the sound of a friendly voice, just the clasp of a warm hand or the flashing response of a kindly eye would have meant so much! How she longed to cast herself bodily into the arms of a friend—no friend in particular —just someone good and kind and true. Would that even a dumb creature were at hand to respond to her mood! She was terribly alone, after all. There are such moments in all lives.

Barbara recrossed Tremont Street, where the busy crowds were eternally passing to and fro. She walked past the Old Granary Burying Grounds and looked in absently. It was very quiet in there where the grass was velvet to the kiss of the sun and where the tottering tombstones eyed her in friendly fashion. Wisely they

seemed to peer into her face as if to command her attention and to speak to her.

A responsive light crept into her eyes. There was something very appealing, very soothing in the quiet of the spot. There, within the shadow of a modern skyscraper and the old brick church, the dead bivouacked. Of a generation long past, they kept faith with the present, resenting not at all the fact that a modern city had grown up about them, yet refraining from encroaching on their peaceful home, here where the green lace-work of tall old elms wove embroidered patterns with the sunlight.

Barbara did not wonder that in the painful struggles which some souls had to endure there were those who envied the sleepers.

IV

A FUNNY OLD WORLD

DOCTOR SOMERS recalled many times the little incident of his friend's visit to old St. Joseph's in the West End, now several weeks past. He sometimes wondered about George Barrows. There seemed to be depths in his character never quite revealed to those nearest to him. True, all lives were lived more or less in private. But, granting that there were barriers in every human life beyond which none may penetrate, they seemed more impregnable, more baffling when they surrounded this young man.

Francis knew that George was an ardent Catholic, and wondered at it. He knew a little of the externals of the Church and of his friend's devotion—that, for instance, George invariably attended the Nightworkers' Mass at half-past three on Sunday mornings. Well nigh exhausted when he finally closed the editorial desk, Francis could picture him taking his way through the deserted streets to old St. James,

down in the heart of Chinatown. 'Twas strange! And Francis had a vague idea that George went to Mass daily, and perhaps to Holy Communion. He knew the customs of pious Catholics, although he could not appreciate them.

Francis admired George. There seemed to be but one weak point about him, his religion. For to Francis the Catholic Church represented a distinctly foreign element, an undesirable element of age-old superstition. Beyond a feeling of pity for her blindness he had no quarrel with the Church. And yet his friend's loyalty annoyed him strangely.

Passing through the old North End, one evening and along Hanover Street, he saw just ahead a church tower. He did not know that it was old St. Stephen's. Once a flourishing Irish parish, it had now but a handful of the early families among its congregation. And yet it somehow kept a charm, as historic places always do, especially if they be connected with religion.

A strong scent of the salt water stung his nostrils. Just beyond, although he could not see, was the water. The old congested district appealed to Francis, who liked nothing so well as to feel the pulse of life throbbing all about him.

Voices in the soft and beautiful Neapolitan tongue reached his ear, and a soft light came

over his countenance. Francis was particularly fond of the Italian language, which suggested images of beauty to his sensitive soul.

Glancing down a short side street, he suddenly saw a cross gleaming over an open doorway. He stopped short. Why, he never could tell. But he stood irresolute for a moment, looking in the direction of the cross.

There was something strangely fascinating about the cross. Among the thousands of roof-tops, steeples, domes, treetops, weathervanes, emblems of all sorts, it stood out clearly. It was a relic of history made nearly two thousand years ago on the summit of a Hill in far-off Palestine. It was far more solitary, far more august, far more significant than Bunker Hill Monument or the Minute Man or any of the historic monuments which stood proudly out over the landscape and challenged the attention of all who looked upon them and recalled the stirring memories which they bespoke.

The cross was the emblem of pain, strange relic of a pagan world when men put their victims to death on its extended arms. Long ages had taught more civilized and humane methods of punishment. And now, in the filtering sunbeams of this back city street, above the vegetables exposed in the vendors' carts, above the

array of washings floating from sundry balconies and fire escapes, the cross still threw out its robust and friendly arms.

It fascinated Francis the while he disliked it. He hesitated a moment, then turned abruptly into the narrow street and walked to the open door of the church.

Within its shadow a group of noisy children were playing and quarreling healthily. Their shouts penetrated into the peace of the holy place. A very old woman came out of the church; in her hands was a string of brown wooden beads.

Feeling that every fiber of his being vibrated with a horrid repugnance to his act, Francis resolutely pushed his way into the dim interior. A long flight of cement stairs led down, down into seemingly utter blackness. Once he nearly stumbled, but clutched at the railing and finally found himself on the ground.

It was quite dark for awhile, but gradually his eyes became accustomed to the dim light. He walked up the center aisle, wondering at himself.

There were several dark-curtained closets on either side of the church. These Francis judged rightly to be confessionals. He shuddered again. Memories of dreadful things he had heard or read came back to him. The confessionals

seemed like monsters hiding grim secrets in their embrace. "I suppose it's just a part of the money-making scheme," he said to himself and passed them by.

In one of the pews he observed a blackshawled figure rocking itself to and fro—whether in misery or in ecstasy he could not tell. But he caught the words in Latin, "Sancta Maria . . . Mater Dei."

There came to him unbidden the strains of the beautiful refrain by Percy Kahn, his favorite. This poor woman understood more than he of the meaning of these words! 'Twas strange!

Francis slipped mechanically into a pew near the altar and sat down on the bench. He waited to see what would happen next.

But nothing happened. After awhile several bareheaded children trooped in and up to the altar, where, after much bobbing up and down and blessing themselves and scampering to and fro among the various shrines and falling over one another, they finally ended in a burst of giggling and disappeared noisily.

Francis smiled somewhat ironically. It seemed grotesquely irreverent to him. He could not understand that the children were simply expressing themselves, that they were at home in their Father's house. Possibly children born of

American parents did not behave in just this fashion. Or possibly they did at times, for children will not be old men and women. It was simply their manner. They were born for laughter and sunshine; they were carrying their little joys to the feet of the loving Saviour. Surely He understood better than this proud young man that they came in response to His invitation of the long ago. Christ may even have been singularly comforted to see them scamper up to Him just to say "Buon giorno, Signore mio!" and then run hastily away to their play. Who could tell?

Several other worshipers, all feminine, trudged in and out while Francis sat silent near the altar. They were all singularly demonstrative in their devotions, sometimes praying audibly, sometimes prostrating themselves, and striking their breasts. He was rather amused by it all.

"And this is the Catholic Church!" he mused.

To the left of the main altar was a shrine with vivid representation of the Suffering Souls appealing to the Madonna for aid. From a very realistic furnace of flames the tortured ones lifted their hands to the Lady who, with a very chubby child in her arms, looked toward them but made no sign. Francis sighed. He did not sympathize.

Over the main altar, in a niche, he suddenly noticed a radiant figure which had not come to his attention until now. He straightened himself and gazed attentively at this figure. It touched a responsive chord in his soul.

It was the figure of a young monk, strongly built, in brown habit, his waist girded by a white cord. He knelt in adoration before a lovely Child in white tunic Who stood on a prie-dieu but a few feet away.

With head thrown back and gleaming eyes fastened on the radiant apparition, the monk contemplated the child in apparent ecstasy of soul. His strong arms outstretched, the sleeve of his habit falling carelessly back a few inches from the wrist, showed to advantage a hand fine and shapely. Long slender blue-veined fingers —pure hands, the hands of a scholar and a saint. Was this a mere thing of plaster and paint—or was it something else?

Fascinated by the image, Francis watched the ecstatic face in perfect absorption. He would not have been surprised if the sensitive lips had moved and words come forth, a cry of love or pain. The countenance, shining with seraphic light, the forehead surmounted by a circlet of light-brown hair, the rest of the head shorn smooth.

Such purity, such intensity of feeling, such yearning, such exquisite love and peace awoke an untouched note in the melody of the young physician's soul. Something like a sob rose in his throat. And yet he knew that this was but a thing inanimate, a work of art inspired by a master hand. His inspiration was but a passing dream. So pagan statues in the art galleries were beautiful. And yet this was a different beauty somehow.

The face of the youthful monk was ashen gray beneath the radiant light that fell from the glance of the Child. Probably long vigils and severe penances had drawn a veil over those lovely features. There came to Francis' memory a certain passage of Swinburne:

"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray with thy breath.
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness of death.
Sleep—shall we sleep after all? For the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend."

There was more, but he drove the words from his perplexed brain.

How long Francis remained immovable in contemplation of this image of a young Francis-

can monk of the long ago, he never knew. But when finally he woke from his reverie the hidden sun was making a dim last glory on the western nave of the church and the altar lamp threw wider circles out over the sanctuary and quiet aisles.

Turning to leave the altar, Francis noticed another shrine to the right. It represented the figure of an aged monk, shriveled and worn, clothed in the same brown habit and the same white cord. He wore a short pointed beard, and his hair was iron gray, so far as he had hair, for his head was shaven closer than that of the young monk. His body was composed on a marble slab, it was long and rigid, the limbs placed lightly together, the hands folded on the breast. Francis particularly noticed the hands, like those of a living corpse, thin, bony, shriveled hands, but with the same awful whiteness of purity about them. The feet were covered with coarse hempen sandals. They were thin and rested close together in a straight line.

Spellbound, for the second time, Francis paused and looked intently down at this almost living impassive thing. So this was the representation of an old monk as he had passed from life. . . . An inscription beneath the marble slab read: "San Leonardo di Porto Maurizio."

Again a few lines of Swinburne struggled to Francis's lips:

"O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods,
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods. . ."

The rack and the rod and the gibbet of this man, Francis felt, during his mortal life had been the terrible and crucifying immolation of the will, of the bleeding heart that must have cried out sometimes for the things of men, and yet strove to be content with the things of God. For the sacrifice of will was the hardest immolation of all.

This dead monk had paid the price of the peace he was now enjoying. Worn and emaciated in body, but vigorous in soul, his wick had burned down steadily into the oil.

Francis breathed a sigh of relief when be finally gained the outer world and stood upon the sidewalk. It seemed that the Catholic Church had a dangerous charm for the unwary who sought to penetrate her thrilling soul mysteries. It were best not to be too rash. For she threw about the untutored a veil of medieval mysticism, so Francis believed, hiding the stern practical realities. She intoxicated with her

beauty, glimpsed here and there in spite of one's unwillingness to respond.

Francis resolved to attack his friend, George Barrows, on the subject of plaster images which so disturbed people at times as had those back there in the dim old church.

V

WHY CAN'T WE BE HAPPY?

IN the fashionable dressmaking shop of Madame Laurier a busy hum of feminine voices was plainly discernible above the click, click of scissors and the monotonous droning of a sewing machine.

It was a small stuffy shop, whose one window looked out on the back entrances of a group of stone apartments on the next street. Most of these fashionable blocks were lodging houses for college students. The latter were accustomed to come and sit by the open windows and thrum the mandolin or guitar and sometimes nod or smile in schoolboy fashion to the girls across the way in Madame Laurier's little shop. The long and tedious hours which the apprentices spent bending over the eternal stitches were somewhat lightened by these pleasant little interruptions which came floating across the strings of musical instruments.

There were but three apprentices at work now,

for it was the early part of the summer season—Florence Jordan, the head girl, Marie St. Clair, and Barbara West, a newcomer whose apprenticeship had commenced a week before.

Barbara, seated beside an open window, was industriously hemming a piece of pale blue satin, weaving little girlish fancies into every delicate stitch. Her fingers, slender and graceful, moved swiftly over her work; they seemed made to touch delicate and beautiful things.

A pungent odor of oranges caused the girls to pause in their labors and moisten thirsty lips. Madame, in her office, was evidently indulging in the luxury of a mid afternoon luncheon.

Barbara dropped her busy work for a few moments. Her eyes strayed beyond the dizzy expanse of rooftops to where the white walls of one of the playhouses were sunning themselves idly. She sighed heavily. Just to sit in the top balcony and listen to the sweet strains of music would mean inspiration, happiness. But this luxury was denied her.

She looked pensively out into the sky, a little tent of blue pitched over the stuffy workroom where she sat at her unloved task.

Little Marie, whose principal duty just now was to do errands and to keep the workroom in order, was humming a snatch of a song:

Myrtle and jessamine for you,
(Oh, the red rose is fair to see!)
For me the cypress and the rue.

Marie was almost too young to know anything but hope, and yet the good things of life had early passed her by.

Her fresh birdlike voice soothed Barbara's ruffled spirits. Florence, calm and quiet, moved about the table, adding a pin or a twist to a fold of the garment she was draping over a form.

Yes, life had a touch of brightness even in the dull workroom if one did not go purposely seeking out the cobwebs in the corners. Diagonally across from the rear of the building was a convent academy. It was a day school where many favored children of well-to-do parents enjoyed the superior advantages of a training with the Sisters.

Although it was the vacation season, a few of the younger children had remained. They were enjoying the pleasures of the garden and ran to and fro like irresponsible butterflies, their white dresses making a pretty picture in contrast to the gaily colored flowers.

Barbara watched them with interest. Their future seemed so secure; they knew the peace of a good Christian home and loving parents, perchance of devoted brothers and sisters. The lot

of the orphan in comparison was bitter unless sweetened by a deeper and stronger Love.

"Don't you wish you were one of those children, Barby?" asked Marie, pausing in her work of picking up pins to look wistfully out of the window. "To think of having nothing to do but enjoy yourself! And to wear pretty dresses every day!" Marie glanced disapprovingly at her worn apron and made a wry face which caused Florence and Barbara to laugh heartily.

They did not reply, but in their hearts the two older girls could not blame little Marie for her dissatisfaction. Life seemed to be unevenly divided somehow.

"Barbara!"

The girl rose quickly and moved across the hall to the showroom, where her mistress was exhibiting a new gown to a customer.

Barbara, as model, tried on this gown and that, walked up and down the velvet-carpeted room, assuming first one pose and then another so that the gowns might be viewed from all angles.

Pauline Metz, Madame's customer, was difficult to please. She was a young girl and heiress to a considerable fortune. A spoiled child, although lovable.

Pauline glanced curiously at the model, Bar-

bara. She thought her singularly refined, singularly graceful and very pretty. Clearly she was fitted for something better than this.

When Madame Laurier left the room to answer the telephone, Pauline addressed Barbara in a low tone.

"Tell me—do you like this sort of thing? For it must be fearfully stupid. And people are so fickle and hard to please. I know that I am. But then, I'm tired of everything, and it's hard to suit me. One doesn't wish to be common, but it takes hours of planning and selecting and fitting—and then the gown is a perfect fright! Or somebody else has one just like it. Sometimes I get dreadfully tired of it all."

Pauline was thinking of Dr. Francis Somers as she spoke. She liked him, but he seemed to be a very unsatisfactory person. He appeared in society but rarely, and then she was quite certain that he knew nothing whatever about ladies' costumes, and cared nothing whatever about them. Pauline's mother favored the young and growing physician, but the girl was not anxious to please him. Prince Charming should not be absorbed in horrid germs and stupid bottles and books which fairly took one's breath away with their words of prodigious length and impossible meaning.

Barbara lifted amused eyes to the lovely face before her.

"I can't say that I do like this sort of thing," she confessed frankly. "I'd ever so much rather do something else. Almost anything else. But we can't have things our own way always."

"That's just it! Why can't we?" Pauline queried, a discontented little air stealing over her fair countenance. "What's the use of having all the money you want, for instance, when things aren't a bit interesting and you've got a fright of a headache, and when you've tried all sorts of stunts with your hair and it simply won't curl? And you see the children in the slum districts with the loveliest curls, all natural. Life's awfully stupid at times. Don't you think so?"

Madame Laurier hurried into the room just then.

"I'm so sorry, Mademoiselle!" she said. "But I can't possibly have your costume for Wednesday night. I've just had a call from another customer whom I promised . . ."

Pauline smiled ironically at Barbara. "Always disappointed," she said. "It seems as if things were possessed to be stupid."

Barbara slipped away to the workroom. She found it good to take her place at the open window and to resume her work. She had food for

thought in the fact that Pauline, although she had apparently everything to satisfy her and to make her happy, yet was not satisfied, was not happy. Was her own lot so inferior after all?

Someone in the convent was playing sweetly on the violin. The frail quivering notes floated out across the garden, speaking to her very soul. Tears stole unbidden into her eyes. Life seemed so big a thing, so infinitely complex and variable! There were many to whom one could turn for acquaintance and pleasant conversation. But there were few soul companions. Barbara's was an exquisite nature, and she longed for one to whom she might freely reveal the beauty of her hidden thoughts. For one who would never disappoint her.

Six o'clock having come, little Marie rose stiffly and set to work to gather up the stray fragments of silk, the thread, needles and other articles which littered the tables and floor. Barbara and Florence pinned their unfinished draperies away in clean pieces of white cloth and laid them carefully in a cupboard. The form, divested of its elegance, was placed in a corner and a towel thrown over it, while Marie started to sweep with an energy that caused the dust to fly in a whirlwind of silk, feathers, and string.

They took turns in arranging themselves for the street before a small mirror above the wash-stand. Barbara noted with a slight pang of fear that her cheeks were daily growing thinner and more colorless. The paltry salary which she made at present was barely sufficient to keep body and soul together. And a tiny cough racked her slight form at times. She dreaded the hot weather in the stuffy workroom.

"Cheer up, Barby," said Florence soothingly. "I'm sure you'll get more money after you've been here a few weeks longer. Of course I know it's very hard to wait. But all things work out in the end if we're patient and trusting. Why don't you try a novena to St. Anthony? It's nearing his Feast Day—the thirteenth, you know."

"I think I will, Florence. I'm glad you reminded me. They say he's very powerful. Although, of course, sometimes God doesn't seem to want us to have what we ask for. Yes, I'll try the novena."

"I think you should go and see the doctor, with that cough, Barbara," Florence continued. "Why don't you? I don't believe you're getting nourishment enough. One can't expect to be well and strong working long hours in a stuffy atmosphere and then having nothing to eat. I'm

sure you'll be ill if you don't care for yourself."

Barbara raised a flushed face to her gentle companion. She did not reply, but desperate temptations were raging in her soul. And she thought as so many others have thought: There are those who suffer bitter injustice, poverty, sickness, unkindness, most cruel death, or a living death which is infinitely harder to meet, and God does not interfere. Why? She dismissed the temptation, remembering that through heroic sufferings souls in every age of the world's history had attained to sanctity and to a reward above price. It was the mysterious way of Divine Providence in dealing with elect souls. She knew that she would not exchange places with Pauline Metz, the pampered child of fortune, if she might, for to Pauline had not been vouchsafed the priceless gift of faith.

At the door the three girls parted, going their separate ways. They walked quickly, as those who having been imprisoned for a long time, are at last set free to enjoy the fresh air and sunlight.

The streets were filled with people just getting out from their work. They hurried to and fro, jostling one another, but strangely cheerful.

No wonder, for they were going home. For most of them the cares and happenings of the day would be discussed about the cheerful table, where those whom they loved would understand and sympathize.

Barbara smiled, for she was at peace just now.

VI

IN WHICH NOTHING HAPPENS

"I CONFESS that I don't know what came over me," Doctor Somers said to his friend George Barrows as they sat in the office of the former one afternoon of the following week. "But I went into a Catholic church for the first time in my life."

George was very much surprised at the admission, and very much interested. He sat upright in his chair and leaned forward.

"Well, what did you think of it?"

"Well, I found it rather grotesque. Pardon me if I hurt your feelings. Of course it was strange to me, and I confess I found some things ridiculous. I don't pretend to understand the doctrines of the Church, however. Of course there's some beauty there," he conceded after a moment. "Now I noticed, for instance, the figure of a young monk. You've seen it over the main altar in St. Leonard's Church? No? Well, I confess that there was something about

it that moved me strangely. What it was I can't pretend to say. But I truly never experienced anything quite like the sensation. A sort of spell seemed to be cast over me, and I felt as if I were centuries away from the present and in another world. If life would bear out my feelings! But it doesn't. Of course the emotion which overcame me was but the effect of a very beautiful object on my sensitive nature. I love beauty, and this thing—this monk—was beautiful."

"The Catholic Church," replied his friend slowly, exhaling a whiff of fragrant smoke, "has always attracted those who are lovers of the beautiful. Of course you will admit that when you went into that church for the first time you were repelled a trifle by certain externals peculiarly characteristic of certain forms of art. To one who understands, everything in the ritual is fraught with mystic meaning, and all relate to the life and death of the divine Founder of the Church, Christ. All."

"Tell me—you go to Mass every morning?"

"Yes. Have been going for more than a year now. And you'd be surprised if I were to tell you of the happiness I've absorbed from it. In fact it's got to be so much a part of me that to be without it would leave something radically wrong with my day."

Francis turned an interested countenance thoughtfully toward the ceiling and waited.

"You see, the Mass is as old as Christianity. It has never changed. It's the same all over the world, wherever there's a Catholic altar. You'd appreciate it if you only understood. For it appeals to the most noble, the most exalted sentiments of a man's heart, besides bringing untold graces into his life. The priest at the altar is only a figure, for it is Christ Himself who is priest and victim. Oh, it's wonderful to know that in the midst of a world that's sordid and mercenary you can sometimes steal away from it all and steep your soul in the heights of Sacrifice. The Mass is a Sacrifice, offered for you and for me. And nothing is so necessary for us to learn in this world as the lesson of sacrifice. Life is filled with sacrifice for most of us, but to suffer in union with Christ is something sublime."

"What is it like, to receive Holy Communion?" asked Francis, who was filled with curiosity concerning the things of which his friend had spoken so reverently.

"Why, I couldn't begin to explain what Holy Communion means to a man living in the midst of the busy world. You see, Holy Communion is the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ

together with His sacred Soul and Divinity. If it were not really Christ, what would be the use of receiving at all? What good could mere bread possibly do for the soul? But the Catholic knows that his soul is fed and strengthened by Holy Communion."

George paused a moment to whisper an ejaculation to the Spirit of all light and truth ere he ventured to explain Mysteries before which saints have paused at times with idle pen. Then he continued:

"You're a musician. You know what it's like —after a hard week's work listening to the groaning and the sighing of those who are in terrible bodily pain, after the sight of mangled limbs and flowing blood and the dying throes of men who cling to life as the sweetest possession they have—to sit in the orchestra at your favorite opera, with the lights lowered and exquisite strains of music stealing into the silent places of your soul, just the whisperings of angelic harmonies that lull every restless impulse to rest—and feast your eyes on the stage where a Venetian night is pictured in all its beauty. The soft swishing of gondolas comes faintly to your ear; a lovely princess all in white leans from a window, where beneath her trellised balcony her

lover serenades. And above all a perfect moon; old garlanded porticoes hung with flowers; and through all the silent moving streets of silver water. Oh, what's the use? I couldn't do justice to it if I tried a thousand years. That's but a poor expression of the rapture which a man feels after Communion. It takes one who understands to realize and appreciate. It's described by various writers in the holy books. If you'd like to read for yourself——"

"Thanks, no," said Francis hastily. "They bore me to death. But I think I realize a little what you mean, and the description is not so bad. But to one who's on the outside looking in it's hardly clear." Then he continued. "I've thought that it must be awfully hard to go to confession to a man like yourself. I could understand that less."

"Well, it's hard sometimes," his friend replied. "But if you're in earnest, it makes all the difference in the world. You see, when once you realize that the priest only represents Christ, and that the confessional is another Calvary, and you think of the Precious Blood dripping softly over your soul, stained and dusty after the day in the street, and you hear the whispered words of absolution and know that you're white as snow

though you're a man among men, that you're just as innocent as a little maiden on her First Communion day—why, there's something worth while! And of course everything is buried forever in the great Heart of Christ. You'll never hear from it again. For a little discomfort and possible humiliation you're fit to meet your God if He should suddenly call. Why, it's—— But you can perhaps see what I'm trying to say?"

"I think I see."

But Francis made a little grimace when he thought of the "possible humiliation." It all sounded very nice and plausible when George talked so smoothly between the fragrant whiffs of his pipe. But the recollection of the grim confessionals which he had noticed back there in the old church made Francis shiver and change the subject.

He decided that it would be the last time he would discuss the subject of religion with George. At the first good inspiration he turned resolutely away. He was unwilling to pay the price of peace, a price that was terrifying, that meant the relinquishing of the ease and freedom of a conscience whose god was self.

Francis thought that contrition must exact a toll from the soul. There was sadness enough in

life, was there not? His thoughts drifted to the lines of his favorite poet to refute these more sober reflections:

For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day;
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears.
Why should he labor and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?

VII

THE SPELL OF BEAUTY

BARBARA, walking home in the pleasant twilight about a month later, paused over the rustic bridge in the Public Garden to drink in the quiet beauty of nature. The grass was soft as velvet, of a vivid green, with flower-beds gay by contrast. The lazy swanboats floated slowly beneath the arched bridges and past miniature islands of rock where verdant mosses clung for footing among the wildflowers. A few canoes and rowboats glided in and out, making a pretty picture.

In the near distance rose the tall blocks of the business and residential sections. They were like giant monuments fringing in this pleasant bit of valley. The sky was mildly blue, with a few fleecy clouds trailing across, and an occasional bird winging its joyous way to some chosen haunt as instinct prompted. Now and then one of these little creatures uttered a shrill cry. The leaves of the ash and beech trees trembled slightly in the light breezes.

Barbara thought that it was a lovely spot, not unsuggestive of a Garden of long ago where our First Parents walked in the peerless bloom of innocence.

She drew out her pay envelope and felt of it. It seemed unusually bulky to-night. The thought of a possible increase in salary made the girl's heart flutter a little beneath her plain gingham dress.

She tore the envelope open hastily and found to her surprise that there was a note within. Wondering, she unfolded the bit of paper and read:

"As the season is now growing dull, your services will be no longer required. If you desire to return in September . . ."

Barbara read the note, twice, three, four times. Then she crushed it to small fragments in her hand. She leaned heavily on the stone paling of the bridge and tried to realize what had happened to her.

This was the last straw. Already she had spent the last of her past week's salary on a much-needed pair of shoes. The whole world, the pleasant garden, people, things, seemed to be whirling about. She felt sick and dizzy. Then she noticed that pedestrians were staring at her as they passed by. Quickly she recovered from

her momentary weakness and moved on. When one is in misery it is difficult to hide the pain from inquisitive eyes that seem to pry into the most secret depths of the heart. It is an additional sorrow to feel that one's interior is known, is guessed by those who merely analyze it from a psychological viewpoint and pass on without bestowing even pity upon the victim of God's designs.

Barbara walked on. A little pain darted through her head so wearied with planning during the past months. She dreaded to return to the poor boarding house, where everyone would instantly divine all, and where each would pity her. Sometimes pity can be very hard to bear. Her kind and loyal friends at Mrs. Tomer's were poor and hardworking like herself. Most of them had others who were in some manner dependent upon them, and she could not bear to accept their aid.

She stumbled along for a considerable distance, walking across the Common and then turning in the direction of the Esplanade. Here, tired in soul and body, she seated herself wearily on a bench.

The green water glistened and lapped at her feet. Barbara in her tired soul dimly wondered why more people who had not faith to guide

them did not end it all when tragic sorrows came.

She became aware of a slender girlish figure swinging down the promenade with a small dog attached to a jeweled leash. She did not raise her eyes, however, until the figure came over beside her and a hand was laid on her arm.

"Don't you remember me?" asked a voice that Barbara recognized as that of Pauline Metz, Madame Laurier's customer.

Pauline sat down on the bench beside Barbara and put her arm about her waist.

"Now tell me what the trouble is." Pauline had noticed the dejection of the little figure huddled on the bench and the fixed tearless stare in Barbara's eyes.

Barbara, recognizing Pauline, smiled gratefully and drew the note from the folds of her dress.

"I declare! It's a shame!" Pauline said, flushing angrily. "But never mind this horrid thing. Something's bound to turn up. Perhaps I can help you. I'll ask someone whom I know."

Barbara brightened perceptibly. "I'm sure that's very kind of you," she said.

"Kind? It's only what a human being would do. You poor child! And you're all tired out and half sick. You've simply got to go and see

the doctor and get some medicine right away. Yes, got to! I'm used to having my own way. Daddy says that I'm spoiled, and perhaps I am. But you've got to mind me. I know a young man, a friend, who is a physician. He's very kind, and I shall tell him about you beforehand so that you needn't worry about expense. Now I do hope you're not too proud."

Remembering her painful experiences of the past weary months, Barbara consented, for there was nothing else to be done. "When I get work, I shall repay your friend," she said. "For, of course, I must get work somehow."

"Of course. But just now do as I say, and everything will be all right." Pauline hastily wrote a name and address on a daintily engraved card and handed it to the girl.

"Now promise me that you'll be obedient and go to see the doctor right away—that is, within a day or so. And please let me hear from you." Pauline added her own address to the memorandum.

"By the way," she continued, "would you like to join my Sunday-school class? Not that you'd learn much from me, but you'd have a nice time and meet some of the girls. I'm High Church, you see, although frankly I confess that I don't quite know why or what it all means. Would you

care to join after such a poor recommendation of myself?"

Barbara smiled through her tears. "I—you see, while I thank you very much I don't think I will accept. You see, I'm a Catholic."

"Yes, but so'm I," rejoined Pauline. "It's all the same. You're a Roman Catholic, and I'm just a Catholic, I suppose. We wear the nicest vestments, and all that. You'd never know the difference. Really, I'd love to have you come."

"Thank you, but I couldn't," Barbara protested. "And, please, it's not the same at all. Please excuse me, but it's not the same. Of course the vestments may look the same, and other things. But the externals don't matter so much. You haven't got the Blessed Sacrament and Confession and the Blessed Virgin in the same way that we have. And you haven't got the Holy Father, Pius XI. It's not the same, you see. Please pardon me if I seem ungrateful when you've been so kind."

Pauline looked puzzled for a little space. Then her brow cleared. She looked thoughtfully out over the moving body of water and was silent for awhile. When she spoke again her tone was strangely altered.

"I told daddy so," she said reproachfully. "I just knew it wasn't the same. You see, we had

a maid once—her name was Clare. Well, she told me some things about your faith. I used to admire her beads and all that. And sometimes I accompanied her down to the village, at our summer place, when she went to confession. I used to watch Clare going into the box recollected and sorrowful, and coming out with a look of—I don't know what. And then one day, while she was praying at the altar, I went in. The priest was very nice, although he seemed surprised when I told him about myself. He told me to pray, but I never did. I asked daddy a few leading questions, but he always put me off. And now—I've met you!"

Barbara was deeply interested in the strange recital of her newmade friend. She sat upright on the bench and a glad light crept into her clear eyes. Her own trouble faded quite away. And this was the girl, apparently worldly and pleasure-loving, whom nothing in society had been able to satisfy!

"What became of Clare?" asked Barbara after awhile.

"Oh, Clare entered the Order of Marie Reparatrice in New York. She's there now, I suppose. But daddy made me promise never to see her. I don't suppose I could see her, though. But maybe I could talk with her."

"And did you think that you'd like to be a Catholic?" Barbara asked.

"A Roman Catholic? Well, perhaps I did—once. But I seemed to get all over that. However, I don't think it would take very much to convert me. Why don't you try?"

Barbara, surprised and exultant, looked into the calm face that yet seemed to mask its feelings with a gay smile. Something told her that here was to be one of God's choice flowers in the earthly paradise.

"Why don't you ask me some questions?" she asked.

"Well, that's what I've been wanting to do. I asked a couple of girls once, and do you know, they put me off just as daddy did. Funny! For I always heard that your Church was noted for stealing people into your fold. But I didn't find it that way. Either they didn't know the answer to the things that I asked or they weren't interested in helping a soul. And I was puzzled a bit. Then there were others who seemed anxious to conceal the fact. Why? Isn't this a free country? Why be ashamed of a thing you honestly believe? Of course, these are not representative members of your Church, but somehow they hurt the cause a lot. Don't you think so? There are lots of hypocrites. I confess I'm one,

because I don't care a fig for High Church and yet I'm teaching Sunday school. I don't go to Confession although sometimes I think I'd like to. The rector hasn't gone to that extreme. He says maybe it will come. Fudge!"

Barbara, intensely interested, had nothing to say, but waited eagerly as Pauline went on.

"I know someone else—just like me. He's a hypocrite, too, although he doesn't dream that I know it. He thinks I'm just a spoiled simpleton. But I see through his ideas. He's drifting and fooling around with books, but he doesn't know any more about religion than I do."

Pauline consulted the little jeweled watch on her wrist and rose. "Well, dear, I must go now. Don't you dare worry, and be sure to do as I've told you. Everything is bound to come out all right."

Having parted from her newfound friend, Barbara walked slowly back to Charles Street and turned in the direction of old St. Joseph's. Her heart was very light. Everything seemed to be interesting along the way. The children were unusually merry on the sidewalks and even the dingiest shops attracted her.

She walked up McLean Street. On the porches of the Massachusetts General Hospital she saw the sick reclining in their chairs. The

white porticoes covered with ivy were illumined by the setting rays. It was good to feel the warm blood coursing in one's strong limbs and to know that one had youth and strength on one's side in spite of adversities.

She pushed open the basement door of old St. Joseph's. The red lamp flickered fitfully before the tabernacle, casting circles of light about the sanctuary. The attractive center altar, newly decorated in its fresh garments of white and gold, incited her to prayer. She hastened forward and knelt at the railing.

On the crimson background of the altar was embroidered in golden letters the mystic word: Jesus. Perhaps never before had the girl so tasted the sweetness of that honeyed name. There was no one else near. In a moment of immolation Barbara flung out her arms in imitation of the Divine Victim on the crucifix above the tabernacle, offering to Him the entire sacrifice of all, even life itself, for the greater glory of God and, something impelled her to add: "for the conversion of some soul."

From the street subdued noises stole into the quiet of the sanctuary. They were rather appealing than otherwise, for they served to accentuate the peace of Christ. Time seemed to be revolving around Eternity. Barbara murmured

softly: "In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water. So I have come before Thee."

The words of the beautiful and consoling Psalm, which reveals the yearning of the thirsty soul for its God, out of whom it can never be satisfied, lulled all her restless fears and pains to rest.

VIII

A MESSAGE FROM HOME

"TELEGRAM, sir."

Doctor Somers took the yellow envelope and tore it open. He read: "Your mother is very ill."

A sudden pain stabbed at his heart. For a moment things seemed to be whirling madly about him. He read the message twice, thrice. "Your mother . . ."

Only once do such words sound shrill and ominous in the ears of a man, shaking his soul to its inmost fibers with fear and dismay.

Mechanically Francis prepared to leave the city. Stuffing the necessary articles into his traveling bag, he rang for the maid. "Martha, I've got to go home," he said stolidly. "I don't know just when I may return. My mother's—ill." He could not, would not say "very" ill, although those were the horrid words which the bit of yellow paper had emblazoned on his soul.

His thoughts raced ahead to the tiny railroad station, to a quiet Main Street that he knew and

whose every monument he had memorized by heart, down a turn in the road to a white homestead standing well back, with the river flowing a short distance behind. How far away those few miles seemed! With gaunt fear like a specter stalking before, they were multiplied many times.

Francis ran down the steps two at a time and entered his car. A street piano was grinding out popular airs on the corner of Bowdoin and Beacon streets as he swung past the State House in the direction of the blue haze to westward.

People walking slowly along seemed mere puppets on a sorry stage. At the crossing of Charles Street a traffic officer delayed him a seemingly interminable length of time. Every instant was an eternity in the painful conflict that surged in his breast.

The city left well behind, he came out into a country road and an hour later was driving up the main street of his native town. On both sides the pleasant fields stretched away; the apple trees had shed their perfumed pink blossoms and a thick carpet of petals lay on the grass. The simple white country homesteads, set in the midst of well-tilled fields, stood at brief intervals along the way. Here and there patient stooping figures bent over long rows of vege-

tables or pruned the rugged vines. An ancient and tattered scarecrow seemed to nod in sympathetic fashion to the young man who drove at a frantic speed past the field where it kept honored watch.

Francis passed the old white Methodist meeting-house where, as a boy, he had worshiped—where, seated on a stiff-backed bench, he had fallen asleep to the sonorous droning of the preacher and lulled by the somber monotony of white-washed walls. The gilt weathercock on the steeple was sadly tarnished—that was all the difference between the long ago and now. Behind the church was the same row of sheds for the horses and buggies when on Sunday a handful of worshipers drove to the old meeting-house on the green. It all looked singularly stiff and unattractive to Francis, who passed quickly by without bestowing a second glance upon it.

The late afternoon sunshine was mellow over the land. Here and there in the meadows spotted cows were peacefully chewing the cud and now and then lowed faintly.

Francis plunged into a drive where on either side rambling stone walls beamed in friendly fashion on the wanderer returned. In the cool deep meadows on all sides of the house low gnarled fruit trees dipped their aged branches

in purple clover tops. There was a sweet fragrance over all, but he did not heed it.

Suddenly into his hands was thrust a wet nozzle, and he felt the touch of long silken ears. He dropped his bag and embraced the faithful companion and friend of his boyhood days: "Down, Brutus!" he said. "You're covering me with dust."

The noble St. Bernard gamboled before his master albeit his legs were now becoming stiff with age. A moment after man and dog came up to the front porch.

There was no crêpe on the door. A sigh of relief escaped Francis. He leaned for a moment on a pillar to get his breath. The brass knocker on the door glinted in the rosy sunshine. He entered the quaint low hall with its white window seats and covering of chintz. The place was strangely silent.

He pushed open the sitting-room door. On the mantel he saw the same stuffed birds, a mockingbird and an oriole. There were spotless folds of white mosquito netting draped over the gilt frames of the family portraits.

He closed the door softly and set down his valise. Then he ascended the stairs slowly, feeling that his mother might be asleep. The door of her room was slightly ajar, and he heard the

low murmur of voices. No, she was not asleep or they would be silent. A strange perfume of drugs came to his nostrils.

He entered noiselessly. There were three figures in the room. One was a nurse in white uniform, with a cap over her fair hair. The second was a man in clerical garb. Francis saw with a start that he wore a Roman collar, and recognized him as the young priest from St. Theodore's Catholic chapel.

The third was a motionless figure on the bed.

One swift fearful glance told Francis that he had come just too late to bid farewell to her whom he loved so dearly. His mother slept.

In the first moments of his anguish he advanced to meet the priest. He saw that he held in his hand a piece of silken ribbon, purple and white. It was a stole.

Then he brushed past the priest and advanced to the bedside. His mother was very fair and young. Her slender hands were folded about a small brass crucifix. There was a lingering smile on her lips.

Francis became aware of a man's voice speaking. "There was a fatal accident. Your mother sent for me and expressed her desire of being received into the Church. She was in earnest about it, for it had been in her mind for some

time. I instructed her briefly, prepared her, and she died in peace."

The priest was a young man too, and he looked with pity on the stricken figure before him. Francis was silent. He was suffering terribly, from grief, anger, jealousy, from a vague desire to penetrate the mystery of his mother's death.

"Of course she will be buried from the church," the priest was saying in low steady tones. "If you desire to make any arrangements I shall be pleased to conform with them as far as possible. And should you wish to have prayers at the grave——" Francis turned, almost fiercely.

They had left the chamber of death and proceeded below. "But my mother was a Methodist," he said in a sort of suppressed passion. "It was my father's church—always. She attended there when I was a child, and she's got to be buried from there. I'm sorry this thing should have happened. I'm sure it's all a fearful mistake. Someone must have—— Her mind must have been strangely altered, for I'm sure she never cared anything about the Catholic faith."

The priest was very calm in so difficult a situation.

"It was her dying wish to be buried by the Church into which I received her but an hour ago and at her own request. She died a Catholic, no matter about the past. As such she should not be denied the sacred privileges which are hers by right."

The priest was very gentle. He pitied Francis and he understood the loneliness and pain which he was suffering in this extremity.

Francis hid his face in his hands and wept from sheer misery. In imagination he saw the funeral train passing up the aisle of the Catholic church while all the village wondered and gossiped. His pride was outraged. Things would go on, strange mysterious rites, utterly unintelligible to him and to others. His mother, who in all her life, to his knowledge, had never entered a Catholic church, would be carried there and laid at the foot of the altar. For her the little bell of St. Theodore's would toll sadly over the valley, its silver echoes thrown back from the purple hills, calling the faithful to prayer for the passing of a soul to the great Hereafter. For her all the mysterious rubrics of the Church would be exercised, while the mourners, nearly all of them good Methodists, sat stiffly erect striving to compromise by something like good manners.

"My God," groaned the young man, "this is

terrible! How can I stand it?" And aloud he pleaded with this young priest that he would change the inexorable sentence.

"But—but—you don't know what you're asking!" he said. "You can't understand. You see, we haven't anything in common with the Catholic Church. We——" he broke off in abject misery.

"But I do know. I do understand," the priest replied pityingly. "It is asking a tremendous sacrifice of you to accept these conditions. But you will make it—for her sake. Life is all made up of sacrifices. We all have to make them. Many times I must do things I would much rather not do. I have made sacrifices of things that were nearest and dearest to me. It all comes out right in the end if we do our part. And it may be that if you knew the Church as She is you would feel better about this. Your mother felt that the Church has much to offer to those who are in the last extremities. The Catholic Church is the safest Church in which to live, as it is the only Church in which to die."

"Well"—the effort was exceedingly hard to Francis—"it shall be as you say—since she wished it so. Only tell me—what my mother said to you."

"There was not time to say much, except

under the sacramental seal. That I am not at liberty to divulge to you. But this much I may say. She had long been attracted to the Church. Like many others she had postponed putting her desire into execution. God's ways are not ours. Perhaps He knew that by living longer she might forget the good inspiration, and so His call came suddenly. I am very sorry for you. I too know what it means to be without a mother. But I believe that I have her in Heaven. And of course Catholics have the Blessed Virgin. They have in reality two Mothers."

Francis thought somewhat bitterly, "How does he know that his mother still lives somewhere? That there is a Heaven? For in the last half-hour it seems that everything is chaos."

The priest went away, a gentle dignified figure, along the white road hedged with fragrant blooms. His heart was heavy for the soul of this young man. He knelt a long long time that evening before the shrine of the Blessed Virgin in his little chapel at the crest of the hill. He implored Her who was the Mother of Christ to intercede for the soul of the departed who for some few years had thrust aside God's grace to clutch it eagerly at the eleventh hour. And he prayed fervently for Francis that he would find

peace and grace and light to see God's will and to follow it.

Through the opened window the beeches whispered their loving nocturnal adoration of their sacramental Saviour. The tall purple mountains looked in on the solitary watcher at the altar. The crickets and treetoads took up their querulous repining in the adjacent boughs and meadows. God's holy peace rested over all.

"Memorare, memorare, O dulcis Virgo Maria!" pleaded this devout soul at the feet of his Heavenly Mother. Again and again his pleading accents broke the stillness of the holy place. And the loving queen and Maiden seemed to incline her fair and gentle countenance toward this son of her love and to hold out her maternal arms with more intense yearning, as if she would bestow upon him all the graces that he sought and more.

IX

IS THERE A HEAVEN?

FRANCIS spent a few days in the old homestead after the funeral, looking over his mother's effects and making plans for the disposal of the furniture. There was but one thing left to do, and that was to sell the old place as soon as possible. He could not bear to think of entering these rooms when she was missing.

He wandered in solitary fashion from room to room, pausing longest in those spots most endeared to him by her memory. In this pleasant window overlooking the cornpatch she had sat of old with the darning basket, assiduously repairing the mischief wrought by active little feet which had clambered from the topmost branches of the pear trees to the old stone wall, and raced over the dusty roads in competition with the flivvers, which were just then something new in Hillcrest.

Here, from the sunny dining-room, he could look across to the little burying ground and

barely discern the tall white shaft of marble on which were inscribed his father's name and that of his baby sister Hilda. He was the last of his family. He wept silently.

To George Barrows, who had come down from the city to spend a few hours with him, he spoke rather freely of his emotions. There was something very soothing about George; he was like a woman in his gift of sympathy. It comforted the stricken young man to unveil his feelings without reserve to one who would not deem him unmanly.

"Of course, it was awfully hard to go through with the funeral," Francis confessed. "It was like a weird dream from which I have never quite awakened. It was only the second time that I had ever entered a Catholic church in my life, you see. Fortunately I managed to go through with it. But the relatives—whew!" Francis whistled softly as he recalled the very manifest disedification on the countenances of a score or more of his mother's people. It had been a big ordeal, all in all, although a little thought had crept unbidden into his mind as to whether, after all, there must not be something in a Church which could excite such antipathy after so many centuries of its existence.

Francis looked across the pleasant fields en-

closing God's Acre and sighed heavily. He was very lonely. Then he said:

"Life's a strange thing, isn't it? You never know what's coming next. I suppose that for each of us there are things ahead we do not possibly dream of. Friendship is a strange thing; love's a stranger thing. You go through the world for so many years loving some one near and dear to you, and suddenly he or she is snatched away. You know nothing of the passing out. Only that the void is there and the chair vacant. You can have as many acquaintances as you wish; friends, no. Only four or five. Really only about one to whom the workings of your soul lie open, who will never fail you, and whose sympathies are your very own. Do you recall Emerson's Essay on Friendship? 'Friendship is the secret of the universe. You may thread the town, you may wander in the country, and none shall ever speak of it. Yet thought is everywhere busy about it.' And he goes on to say that the human heart is very inexperienced. 'Many are the dangers to be encountered in this friendship—equinoctial gales and coral reefs ere he may sail before the constant trades.' And love is even stranger."

George bowed assent.

And Francis continued: "We are constituted

of frail material. Sometimes things grow fearfully tiresome to me. All the happenings of life. You get up in the morning and go to work. You meet people and converse, you smile and you frown, and you listen. You sigh and you forget. It's one thing after another. Where's the use of it all when it ends like this?" He pointed with a slender hand toward the white slab of marble gleaming away across the fields.

"Why, to make us aspire to something higher, something purer than earth," replied his friend. "You recall the disciples of Plato? Those youths from Athens, hearing the great philosopher discourse so sweetly of the joys of death, and thinking to reach those sweets the sooner, cast themselves from the cliffs of the Aegean Sea. Of course if you were a Catholic, Francis, you'd understand a great deal more clearly what I mean. The Saints were always thinking about death, and, far from making them morose or unhappy, it made them more joyous than you or I."

Francis sighed as he thought of his dear departed, wondering if she could have been happy at the approach of death. She who had so loved life, who had been so much a part of it. . . .

He tried to grasp at the recollection of her as one does at a frail butterfly that floats lightly

past. Alas, it was useless. Between him and her sweet soul there rose a gray barrier like a cloud. It was sweet-smelling incense that floated up from a little swaying silver boat, held by an acolyte clothed in black cassock and white surplice. Then another, a taller figure, took the censer from the hands of the boy and advanced to the foot of the casket where his lady mother slept, throwing about her a soft haze of smoke that hid her yet more completely from view. Francis was terribly lonely as he recalled this final scene.

When George had gone back to the city on the last train, Francis wandered out of the house that now seemed so barren, so almost sinister. He wandered through the lane beyond the garden and struck into a path that led to the river's brink.

In his boyhood they had called this spot the Town Landing, for here the canoes and rowboats were moored, and here the village boys fished from a miniature pier.

Now the old Landing had fallen into disuse. The water lapped hungrily at the tall green rushes that dipped and swayed at touch of the waves. All was strangely quiet save for this gentle sound. In the warm summer sunlight the pleasant fields dipped away behind Francis; they

were dotted with daisies and buttercups. Away out on the tranquil bosom of the river was a row-boat with a solitary human figure in repose. Here and there through the feathery treetops rose the red chimneys of ancient manor houses, now closed. The town was somewhat sleepy of late years. The old families were scattered here and there. It was almost a dream village, where bees hummed close to one's ear and the tolling of bells sounded somewhere on the other side of the river. The peace of God was all about.

Francis was not religious, but he worshiped beauty, such beauty as that which lay at his feet, that lapped and sucked at the reeds and willows, that stirred in the perfumed boughs of the trees, that hummed in his ear and leaned over him in dim shadows.

A bit of his favorite, Swinburne, came to him in this peaceful, drowsy spot, and he clutched it eagerly:

I found in dreams a place of wind and flowers.
Full of sweet trees and color of glad grass,
In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.

Something bright glittered in the sweet glad grass at Francis' feet. He stooped and picked it up.

It was a tiny silver medal which bore the image of a Lady. There was an inscription, somewhat blurred by dampness, which he read after he had wiped it carefully on his handkerchief: "Mater Immaculata."

X

FRANCIS AND BARBARA

"YOU see, you cannot possibly go on like this," Dr. Somers said, as he drank in eagerly the details of the fair young face before him.

By what possible miracle of good fortune this thing which he had so desired had come to pass, he hardly dared to think. Was the medal which he had picked up a sort of charm, perhaps? Had it brought the girl, Barbara, to his door? That first night, when he had caught a momentary glimpse of her passing down the moonlit street, he had hardly thought to see her again. And here she was!

"You will be ill," he continued. "And then—what?"

His voice was kind, Barbara thought. His face was kinder. She looked up, only to drop her eyes quickly. He was gazing intently at her; it was as if he were analyzing her very soul.

Barbara could not know that Dr. Somers was recalling a conversation which he had held with

his friend but a few hours before on the subject of friendship. "You may thread the town, you may wander in the country . . . and somewhere you shall find it."

Barbara spoke in a low sweet tone of voice. "But, Doctor, you see, I have no work at present, and my money is very nearly gone."

It was hard to confide her sorrows to a stranger, a very young and handsome stranger at that.

"I couldn't possibly go away from the city, and I have no place to which I might go. If I remain here, I may find work. I must find work. If I go away, my money will soon be gone."

He was silent for a long time. The girl sat with downcast eyes so that he could the better watch her face, with its pensive and troubled air, which caused the delicate outline to droop a little. Long dark lashes shaded the eyes now striving to keep back the quick tears. The firm and slender hands were clasped nervously about a worn little handbag, and the slender feet were set together in a straight line that barely showed how shabby were the small and graceful shoes. Francis decided that Barbara was a lady, and for this reason he felt the more singularly drawn toward her.

He was trying to think out a plan whereby he

might do something for her without causing her to suffer. And of a sudden came a vision.

The vision of a fair and pleasant spot where tall meadow grasses swept the daisied billows toward blue dancing waves. It was here that he had found the mysterious medal which, he somehow fancied, had brought him this unexpected piece of luck. The Town Landing! The very thing! Somehow Barbara fitted into the picture that he swiftly formed in his mind. Hillcrest went with her somehow. Now how to fit her into this delicious setting!

Francis looked straight into the girl's eyes, and said in a compelling way that was habitual to him on occasions: "I think that I know a way out of the difficulty. I know a good old soul in a place not very far from here, a nice quiet country place. She would be only too delighted to have a young companion for a while, for she buried her only son in the war. She's all alone in the world now, and she'd do anything for me. She's very lonely, now that Malcolm's gone. She lives in the nicest little cottage you ever saw, set in the midst of green fields. It would be a splendid plan for both of you for awhile. What do you say?"

"But——" Barbara was a bit troubled, despite the fragrant vision that unfolded before her tired

heart. "But how could I repay her? For I'm not used to much of any work except sewing, and——"

"My dear little girl"—Dr. Somers began to feel very important and venerable already in his new role—"just leave it to me. Between us we'll fix this thing up so that three people—that is, two people will benefit by the arrangement. To me it seems an admirable idea. Now don't be stubborn or I'll be disappointed in you, for I believe you're a sensible girl. See if my plan doesn't work out all right. We'll have you nice and rosy by fall. You'll be raking hay in a big apron and sunbonnet with——" He was about to say "with that pretty hair all streaming down in the sunlight like a veil," but fortunately stopped in time. Francis was lonely after his mother's going. He had dreamed of Barbara, and here she was! The medal had indeed worked a charm!

Barbara brightened perceptibly. The idea seemed suddenly glorious. And she believed that she could make herself very useful in the wee cottage set in the verdant fields.

"Do you know Stevenson's Garden of Verses?" she asked, with a radiant glance toward him. "You recalled it to my mind when you mentioned the hay:

"Oh, what a joy to clamber there,
Oh, what a place for play,
With the sweet, the dim, the dusty air,
The happy hills of hay!"

Francis beamed approvingly upon her. This girl was more accomplished than he had thought. She read poetry.

"That just expresses it!" he said happily. "Whew! I never thought I was so clever!" Whereat they both laughed like happy children. "I'm very fond of this good old lady of whom I told you. She's somewhat prim, but you'll like her. She's true, and that's all that matters. You'll hear a lot of hymn tunes played on the old melodeon. She's a perfectly good Methodist, you see. But then, her famous gingerbread and custards will more than make up for what you have to stand in the other line. You're not by any chance Methodist, are you? For then you and she would get on famously about the hymns. There'd be a chorus. You're not Methodist, are you?" The last came inadvertently.

Francis thought it would be jolly were Barbara of the religion which his family had held for generations, which his mother—— He stopped suddenly in his trend of thought, while a dark sorrow took possession of him. His mother had not stayed a Methodist. At the last

hour of her life she had adjured the teaching of her fathers. . . .

Barbara flushed. "I'm a Catholic," she replied, looking firmly into the eyes of the young physician.

Francis grew cold. His face fell, and a grim little line settled about his sensitive mouth. He was sorry that the girl was a Catholic. He would have preferred that she was anything else in the world, even a pagan. Strange obstinacy! Because, really, why should it make any difference to him? And yet it did make a great deal of difference. He was upset for a moment.

Then, for he was a gentleman, he said: "I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to be rude. But I was thinking of something else."

He broke off awkwardly. Barbara was vaguely disappointed. Her eager anticipation died away. Perhaps God was trying her, and this sweet vision was not to become real.

Then Dr. Somers brightened again and resumed the conversation. "If you can be ready by to-morrow night," he said, "I think I could manage to get off between office hours and take you over to Hillcrest. It will be so much easier than a trip in a stuffy train. It's only a short drive, anyhow. I think I can make it easily. Would you be willing to drop around here at six o'clock?

You could arrange your things before then and have your trunk sent ahead. Is that all right?"

All right! Barbara felt that the sunshine had suddenly streamed over her, that she was transported into a lovely land where all things beautiful lay about her for the asking. Tears came to her eyes, and she could not drive them back. After so many weeks of misery, of failure, of humiliations, of hunger, of stifling! Now came the reaction which happiness brings.

"Don't cry, little girl," Francis said awkwardly, for he could not stand a woman's tears. "It's nothing. I'm glad to do it for you, and I know you will be able to do a great deal in return for—for the good old soul to whom I am taking you. I'll telephone her to-night. She's lonely too!"

"You see, Hillcrest is my old home," he went on. "It's a lovely spot. Sometimes I half wish I could have stayed there always, content with the simple rural things. There's a pretty bend of the river that winds lazily through one end of the village and there's a charmed spot that I often think about when I'm blue or restless. The Town Landing, the old folks still call it. You can go rowing when you like, past the weeping willows and the fields sprinkled with meadow flowers. There's a peaceful Main Street where

you can hear a pin drop—not much like Tremont or Washington streets, I'll say! And it's cool on the hottest days of summer. Swinburne—do you know him?—has described the spot accurately, although I suppose he called it by some other name:

"Along these low pleached lanes on such a day,
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,

And then he goes on to describe the 'old wild road and the bees about the flowering thyme.' "

Barbara flushed with ill-concealed pleasure. "I like some of his descriptions very much," she said, "although——"

He waited.

"Although I think he is pagan," she said, with a blush.

Francis winced. There came to his mind the image of a tall young monk in ill-fitting robe, with angelic face uplifted and pure hands outstretched toward a little Child. Barbara was a Catholic. Of course she was narrow and restricted in her views.

But he asked calmly: "Which of his poems do you particularly like?"

"Well, after the Hymn to Proserpine, I think I like Faustine best."

He smiled. She clearly appreciated what was good in poetry. He quoted in a full rich voice:

"For in the time we know not of
Did Fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
Your doom, Faustine."

"It's a very realistic thing; perhaps morbid, don't you think?" he asked.

"Realistic, but not morbid," she replied. "To me it represents the poisoned cup of pleasure, in striking contrast to the joys of an innocent life." She colored again, for she was still shy with this young man whom she had met but once.

Francis was agreeably surprised to discover that Barbara's mind was far in advance of her years. That she loved and appreciated beauty. In anticipation he enjoyed many a pleasant hour with her beneath the old apple trees at the river's edge. Already Francis knew that Barbara somehow belonged to him. He meant to cultivate her to his own taste, and then—who could tell? He smiled, for youth is impetuous and leaps over many obstacles when it is willing to recognize that there are obstacles.

"I think that you are going to be very happy," he said, smiling into the childlike face of the girl before him. "So now don't worry any more.

And I know that you're going to bring a flood of sunshine to a house where loneliness reigns. Now it's settled. I'll call—or rather you're to call here to-morrow, at six. Meanwhile I'll get in touch with Mrs. Forest, and day after to-morrow you'll be deep in daisies and buttercups and drenched in honey and fresh milk."

"How can I ever thank you?" Barbara raised a rather pale little face to his. He thought that he could not ask for more adequate thanks than the look in those clear and trusting eyes. He meant to prove worthy of the confidence she so sweetly reposed in him.

Left alone Francis threw himself into a great armchair by the fireplace in his study and sat musing for a long time. Strange to say, the image of his mother did not come to him to-night, but only that of this young girl. It was the first time that he had felt himself so singularly drawn toward any woman.

His mother lay sleeping quietly in the little burying ground at Hillcrest. Barely a week had passed and already the face of an unknown girl had aroused him. It was not that Francis loved his dear departed less. But it was the call of youth in his heart for one of its kind. What principally attracted him in this girl he could not say—whether it was the sensitive quiver of the

lip as with downcast eyes she related her little story, or the somewhat nervous motions of her beautiful and shapely hands. It was perhaps those hands which especially attracted Francis. For they spoke more eloquently than words; they were singularly expressive. When she had placed one of them in his, such a little shapely hand, such a warm, tender little hand, it had quite fitted into his strong palm. It seemed to belong there, and he missed it when she had drawn it away.

Francis could picture Barbara's delight, wandering about the quaint streets and lanes of the old-fashioned town where peace seemed to brood everywhere, where the old farmers rumbled away to town in the early mornings on market days with their luscious wares, where the many-hued garments of the scare-crows swayed in the fields menacing the too-audacious birds, threatening them with powerless arms, which shook in weird fashion in the summer breeze. Orchards, cornfields, flowerbeds, quaint cottage rooms, old rambling fences—all would take on new grace and charm for Barbara. Barbara! Francis liked the name.

He could picture her in gingham gown feeding the chicks or racing with Brutus down a dusty lane; hanging over the fence, her face

buried in honeysuckle; looking into the pasture-land where the two favorite Jerseys browsed and chewed the tender grass; seated on a low stool beside the window with her sewing in her lap, the delicate agile fingers flying to and fro with the busy needle. A new and charmed life seemed to have dawned for the young man who but a week before had been broken-hearted and desolate.

He stretched out his slippered feet luxuriously to the blaze, for although it was June the night was somewhat damp and chilly.

He had viewed the pleasant side of the picture. On the reverse side—what? Barbara was a Catholic. This was a disadvantage. It made him regret that there was a barrier between his thoughts and utter sympathy with his little patient.

He recalled his visit to the old Franciscan Church. Franciscan! For the first time he realized that his own name was identical with that of the Poor Man who had traveled up and down the world in a worn and mean habit, despising the conventions of the rich and calling on all things to love God and forsake aught else. He frowned. Francis—Francis of Assisi!

He remembered Longfellow's description of the gentle maiden, Evangeline, passing down the

street of Grand Pré after Confession, with the light of God upon her. For Evangeline it was all right, perhaps. For a poem it may have been all right—rather picturesque in fact. But for Barbara it was another matter. He wondered if all Catholics went to Confession, and hoped that she did not. He believed that he could easily teach her his philosophy of life—the love of beauty and the perfect freedom to worship in whatever form beauty appealed.

He wondered what his mother would think of the girl—his mother who lay in the little Catholic cemetery of Hillcrest in the shadow of the cross, away from her ancestors, her parents, those who had loved her most, while the village gossips sat in the prim little parlors and drank tea and discussed the strange event which had brought her to adopt this strange and hated religion on her bed of death.

He bit his lip. The potion was very difficult to swallow. It had created a sensation in the narrow little town. Everyone was talking about it. The popular verdict seemed to be that this sweet lady, as a result of the sad automobile accident, in which she had struck her head, had become deranged before her death which occurred barely an hour afterward. Otherwise what reason could there be for her extraordinary act? But

there was one who did not talk in Hillcrest—that is, to anyone but God. The young priest who had had the happiness of receiving this belated sheep into the fold went about the streets silently, and received with perfect indifference the hostile glances cast upon him from all quarters.

Francis rose and paced up and down the room. He sometimes thought that he would have his mother's remains removed and placed in the Protestant burying ground of Hillcrest. It could be done. For he felt singularly out of place standing beside her grave in the Catholic cemetery. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul!" "My Jesus, mercy!" These and other ejaculations inscribed on the ancient tombstones made him shiver.

But the priest had said, "It was her wish." Well, then, he would leave the thing as it was. He could not alter the strange decree of fate.

Barbara was a Catholic! Some day perhaps he would tell her the story of his mother's death. She might be able to offer some solution of the mystery. Who could tell?

XI

DAVID DREAMS OF A LITTLE PRINCESS

"DAVID!"

The widow Forest paused to dry her hands on her checkered apron and beckoned to a young farmer who was weeding a row of vegetables in the adjoining lot. Her voice was shrill but not unpleasing.

The young man straightened himself, waved his hand in response to the summons, and came striding over to the fence, which was thickly covered with sweetbriar. He removed his hat, somewhat ragged as to brim, exposing a shock of auburn hair, curly and thick, well brushed back from a manly forehead. David's blue eyes had a few fine lines about the corners, induced by constant exposure to sun and wind. His sturdy brown arms were bare to the elbow.

"David," said the little lady, "I'm so flustered that I hardly know where to turn. Of course she's welcome to come, the poor dear, and if she can be content with plain fare and simple

ways, I can remove the old blue bedspread and bring down that little white cot that's up attic. Oh, I'll fix that part of it all right. But I declare to you, David, that it fairly took my breath away with the suddenness of it. My own dear Francis says it's the thing for her, and that settles it."

David waited patiently, hoping for a speedy solution of the problem that had proved so agitating to the little old lady.

"When the doctor 'phoned, you can believe I was excited. There was the gingerbread in the oven, and I just knew it was burning to a crisp. But what could I do?"

"You couldn't do a thing," said David, soothingly. He was eager to hear more about this mysterious "she" who was apparently coming to Hillcrest and to the little cottage.

"No more could I. And just at that identical moment, if the grocer's boy didn't come thumping on the door and—"

"And you knew he would eat half of the strawberries out of the basket in the interim," suggested David, smiling roguishly. "But you had to listen to the message which was—was—"

"Yes, yes! How fussed I am, to be sure! Where was I? Oh, yes, at the back door and the grocer's boy—"

David leaned forward on the fence and sighed despairingly. Then he resigned himself to inevitable fate.

"You remember how I always said I'd never have that telephone put in," continued Mrs. Forest. "And how, when I finally did resign myself, it gave me the fidgets every time I heard the bell. It was so—so startling to hear a voice from nowhere, you see, David. It almost made me feel that the end of the world might be coming, and that's all there was to it. And ever since—but to return to Francis. He said she was coming, and he's going to bring her tomorrow."

"Who is she, Auntie?" asked David. He thought that she must be a very modern young woman, judging from his estimate of Francis, whom he knew by appearance and from hearsay.

"I'm sure I—— Oh, David, do see those hens in the tomatoes!"

"Auntie, who is she?" David was determined.

"Well, she's a Miss East. Or was it South? I declare I quite forget. But I know 'twasn't North. There, I have it. Of course—West! For I instantly thought of the grape trellis so's to fix it in my mind. David, do you s'pose you could get some white enamel and fix that bedstead up a mite?"

"I shouldn't wonder," David replied, heartily. He was satisfied that he had the whole story. A city girl coming to the country for some wild roses! David was thrilled. Life was a bit humdrum at times in this remote corner of the world. It was apt to be so for the young farm hand in the fields as well as for the physician in the city streets. Life was sometimes a bit lonely, too.

David disappeared into the shed behind the house. When he reappeared he carried a paint brush and sundry jars, and his face was flushed with pleasant anticipation.

All the rest of the evening he labored painstakingly over the bed. It was for the Princess —so he termed the city girl—the Little Princess, the Little Queen. David felt intuitively that this was more than an ordinary girl, or Dr. Somers would hardly have taken such an unusual interest in her.

David had never spoken to Francis. He alone of all the townspeople argued hotly when unkind words were said in regard to Mrs. Somers' deathbed conversion. David understood perhaps as well as the priest, for he was deeply religious by nature. He understood that the sweet lady had come at last into her rightful heritage. And whenever he chanced to visit the

little cemetery he invariably paused to kneel on a newmade mound. He was the only one in the village who remembered to pay his devoted tribute. David could do for the departed what her own darling child was unable to do. He could murmur a fervent De Profundis for the repose of her soul, or a decade of the beads, the latter a devotion dear to the heart of the man, who was singularly childlike in his piety.

That evening when his work on the farm was done and the painting was successfully accomplished, David took his best friend, a short corncob, and sat on the doorstep. David was all-round man of work on a beautiful estate adjoining the Forest cottage. Just now his people were traveling in Europe, and he was alone for the summer.

David was a dreamer as well as a man of action. There was time in his schedule for indulgence in both. To-night his dreams were somewhat confused and fragmentary. As the lazy spiral drifts of white smoke ascended into the blue ether his thoughts drifted out in pursuit of them.

And in the white clouds he saw: A Little Princess dressed in white, with hair of gold like the heart of a daisy and dress like the daisy's shield. Saw her as plainly as if she were present

before him, and wondered whether her coming would make any difference in his life. David did not know that it was to make a great, very great difference.

There, a little way before him on the grass, was her little white bedstead, trimmed here and there with a knob of gold by David's painstaking hand. Its whiteness seemed to suggest something of the soul of her who was coming to take possession of the cottage and of the hearts of two simple people, who had for a long time wished for something to brighten the dull routine of everyday existence.

The Angelus sounded from a little tower at the crest of the hill. David knelt on the step, while he recited in low voice the old, old Prayer that a great artist once took as his favorite theme.

"The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary . . ."

Across the yard came the strains of an old-fashioned hymn. Auntie Forest was giving out airs from the well-thumbed hymnbook, as was her nightly custom. "Throw Out the Lifeline," and "Abide With Me," faithfully followed by "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

David finished his devotions and sat down again to dream. A few birds skimmed slowly across the sky. The chicken yard was empty.

He could see the rows of feathered heads snuggling against the mother hens in their cozy little apartments. Brutus, Francis's last bequest to Mrs. Forest, lay a few feet away dozing on the earth, with one eye open. Everything on the farm was slumbering. The wheezy airs of the old melodeon came more subdued in the mellow distance.

David finished his pipe and ascended to his apartment in the great barn, a snug room overhead with everything at hand that he loved best. Cozy and venerable chairs, a homey bedstead with crazy patchwork quilt, books, and a nice little table, all looking out toward the river. Over the bed was a large crucifix. Not of delicate gold or silver or ivory composition, but rude wood with a realistic plaster figure of Christ, all the vast Wounds gaping wide. The head, slightly drooping and turned to one side, seemed to be seeking a place for its rest.

Sometimes, gazing intently on these great gaping Wounds which some crude but understanding hand had fashioned without great delicacy or taste, David saw the pleasant picture of this still valley vanish from the eyes of his soul. Something from these deep Wounds called to him, telling of a peace far beyond and above that which he had experienced in happiest

moods—of a peace that was beyond compare with the quiet beauty of a summer evening when blue melted into gold, and gold into crimson and purple, and purple to gray, beauty that was infinitely more than the splendid plumage of the peacock that strutted on the side lawn vainly conscious of its wonderful gifts.

David sometimes stretched out his strong brown arms as if he would hold this fleeting vision. But alas, inevitably it eluded him and fled away.

What of the peace it promised? He could not tell. Not the priesthood. For David, kneeling in St. Theodore's on quiet Sunday mornings and watching every movement of the vested figure on the altar, knew that he would never aspire to such dizzy heights if he could. It was not this that called him. What?

David was an intelligent Catholic, a consistent Catholic, who lived as if every day were Sunday and as if, like Blessed Peter Faber, in reality he saw his Guardian Angel in human guise at his side. True, he was only a hired man. But what of that? To David the dignity of labor was a sacred thing. He never found tasks too trifling or despised them because they were such. So, dragging water for the cows, leading them home from the pasture, grubbing in the potato patch,

driving away from the strawberries the marauding birds, sweeping out the stables—all these things were accepted and performed in the reverent spirit of an understanding heart. All these things were part of God's beautiful creation. And David loved the soft, warm, mysterious earth, where myriad forms, undreamed of save in His omniscient Mind, came to birth, flourished and crept through the yielding soil to reach the light. Oh, the wonders of creation! David understood the rapture which Father Frederick Faber, the gentle Oratorian, felt when he described these marvelous gifts of the good God.

Sometimes, leaning on his hoe or spade, David would lift his eyes to the low purple chain of hills that fringed the pleasant valley, and converse with his Maker somewhat after the manner of the Psalmist of old. His heart was thirsty for the Supreme Beauty; his soul cried out for God.

"O God, my God! To thee do I thirst at the break of day! For thee my soul hath thirsted, for thee my flesh, oh, how many ways! In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water."

So now, David, feverish to be near his heart's desire, brushed his hair carefully, put on his best suit, and bounding over the stairs two at a time,

swung lightly down the village street in the direction of St. Theodore's.

It was quiet and dim within the chapel. A faint flicker from the altar lamp described wide circles on the floor. The image of Mary Immaculate threw out motherly arms and bent its head as if to incline to the requests of those who loved her.

David slipped into his own place, a rear bench, having first gently raised the window at his side in order to permit the little whisperings of Nature to penetrate the loving ear of Christ.

He drew out from his pocket his beads, rough, brown, wooden beads, strung with Mary's medal and ending in the little crucifix that was partially worn away in the years by the impress of a strong man's lips. David knew how to meditate, although he had never learned from books. One by one he passed and repassed those scenes so well loved, in which the principal actors were Mother and Son.

Jesus and Mary! David's loneliness and pain fell away at the feet of the two he loved so well. To-night Mary's motherly eyes seemed to pierce him through. It was as if she said, "I am the Princess, the Queen—your Princess and Queen. You belong to me and to my Son. You are wholly Ours."

It was strange. What could she mean? David was puzzled. He listened in his soul, but there came no other word.

He whispered hoarsely through the darkness: "Blessed Lady, you are my mother, and that is even more than Queen. You know that I have no vocation to high things. I am too old now. I am twenty-nine—or I shall be so the last of your month, October. And, Blessed Lady," David's lips were very dry now, "you know I am only a hired man. I am fit for nothing more."

But she said nothing to that.

David sighed. The silver beeches seemed to reëcho the plaint, for they quivered outside the window, and the little flowers bent toward one another as if confiding their secret beliefs. On the opposite side of the chapel the blue and purple mountains leaned near with almost human sympathy.

Night after night David had come here for the last visit, to ask the same relentless, restless, unanswered question. And night after night he went back home along the lonely moonlit road no wiser than before.

To his heart he whispered: "It's a puzzle. I can't make it out." And to God he said: "Thy will be done."

As David bent to genuflect he cast a loving, lingering glance toward the Queen who would not deign to answer her hired servant. And he thought that he discerned a gleam in the eye of the Mother who could not resist her child.

XII

GINGERBREAD AT HILLCREST

BARBARA could hardly believe that she was seated beside Francis Somers in his splendid car and was rapidly whirling away to the little town of Hillcrest.

The car rolled along easily. The girl, totally unaccustomed to such luxury, leaned back on the cushions, then straightened herself unconsciously after the manner of those who have never been accustomed to ease, and whom the contact with luxury frightens a bit at first. She felt a little shy of the slight, silent man beside her. Francis was looking straight ahead down the road, for they had not as yet left the city behind and the numerous obstacles they encountered on the way made driving somewhat precarious.

The blocks, tenements and rooftrees looked somehow very different from the beautiful car. Barbara thrilled as she realized that she was leaving them all behind, and with them memories which had at times been loved.

Francis said: "You will like the country. It's an ideal time to get your first glimpse of Hillcrest."

The country, the weather, are unfailing topics of conversation when people are not too well acquainted with one another. They serve to bridge over many an awkward situation. It is only in the later stages of friendship that one never thinks of alluding to a topic so ordinary. Just now to hear Dr. Somers speak in even so ordinary a manner seemed comforting to Barbara and quite enough to satisfy her lonely heart.

"I like the country very much," she said in a low sweet voice.

Francis liked Barbara's voice. He was glad that he had thought of this plan for her. To enjoy a thing of beauty, something which pleased him, he would go far and endure much.

Barbara was good to look at, so he told himself. It was pleasant to watch that sensitive small face and to listen to her voice, and there seemed to be a fragrance which emanated from her whole dainty being. It spoke to Francis not of the heavy scents of perfume which are found in hothouses, but rather of the frail wild blossoms which grow in country hedges in the springtime.

"Somehow I never feel lonely in the country,"

she said. "The growing things are so near to me, and I seem to understand them and they to understand me. It is not always so with—people." She smiled, just the faintest smile that curved her lips into a perfect bow.

Francis almost took the corner of a hedge as he watched this sensitive sweet mouth and decided that his protegée was a very nice little girl. He was proud of his discrimination.

"That's jolly," he replied. "Well, I doubt if there is a prettier spot in the State than Hillcrest. Of course, the natives hardly appreciate it. Most people don't see beauty when it's right with them. That's human nature, I suppose. What we get easily is not appreciated half so much as that which we must go far to obtain."

Barbara brightened perceptibly. It pleased her to think that she and her kind benefactor had some feelings in common.

They swept past a little burying ground with old crazy stones leaning to one side and sparrows twittering a Requiem above the mould of the graves.

Francis said quietly: "I have just buried my mother." Barbara glanced toward him just in time to see an expression of keenest anguish sweep over his fine face.

The girl possessed all a woman's gift of sym-

pathy. Just now it seemed to draw her nearer to the young physician to learn that he was in trouble, a real trouble, for one's mother was almost a part of one's own self.

She drew a bit nearer to him unconsciously, and peered in childlike manner into his face.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she said. "I'm sure I understand. I lost my dear mother when I was a little girl at school. It's something no one can understand save those who——"

She broke off, for the old sad memories were strong in her soul. And she saw a little old rocking chair, a simple trundle bed with patchwork quilt, a sweet grass sewing-basket and a pair of spectacles lying useless on the sill of a little cottage room looking out to low-lying hills. Not much to remember, some people might think. But to Barbara it represented a world of pain and loss.

Francis drove still more slowly as if to prolong this intimate conversation while they were alone. The tall tops of the trees hung quivering down as if to listen to the words. He was silent, for his grief was new, while hers was old, very old.

So Barbara, thinking to comfort him, said sweetly: "But she is not—lost, you know. You will see her again."

He turned almost fiercely. "That is the

trouble," he said in a hoarse strained voice. "I shall not see her again."

The girl felt suddenly cold and chill. She shrank back into the car. A little pain smote her heart. She understood that the young man beside her, so fortunate in the things of earth, in position, talents, fortune and many other things, was destitute and stripped of the only treasures that count.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life!" The solemn words came to Barbara as she had often read them in her Missal. Above how many tombs were they written, over how many altars did the echoes linger, when the funeral cortege had passed through the doors on its final journey to the grave!

". . . and I will raise him up on the last day." That very morning at Holy Communion Barbara had fed her starving little soul with the Bread of the Strong, the Bread of Children, and she understood the Promise in all its wealth of grace.

Francis, seeing that he had hurt her, changed the subject abruptly.

"See the scarecrow in yonder field," he said, and laughed pleasantly. The bad moment had passed.

Barbara looked, and saw a grotesque figure dressed in a coat not unlike the proverbial coat

of Jacob, nodding and holding out ungainly arms toward the highway. An old stovepipe hat adorned the head of this old dandy, with buff-colored trousers much the worse for wear, and a blue coat ornamented with brass buttons. A deceptive figure, for while he appeared to threaten he was in reality most harmless.

Barbara forced a smile, but she was very unhappy since a moment ago. She wished that she had not made the unfortunate remark about the dead.

But she tried to be merry, and replied: "Do you have many thieves about here? Birds, I mean."

"Wait and see." He laughed again. He was extremely handsome when he laughed that way, so the girl thought. Amusement or pleasure lighted up a face somewhat stern in repose. She suddenly felt that this young man had a strong will and a rigid determination, that he might be very difficult to move if he once made up his mind.

Why should this opinion have disquieted Barbara? She sighed again, remembering with a pang of fear what a good old priest had once said to her: "The more beautiful danger appears, the more dangerous it is."

Not that one could possibly connect evil with

this young man who had been so kind to her. But, but——

Her thought broke off abruptly and came straight back to the quiet country road and the sweet-smelling shrubs by the wayside.

"You know what Cowper says?" asked Francis. "'God made the country and man made the town.' I think he was right. What do you think?"

They turned up the little main street of Hillcrest. Barbara espied with a little throb of excitement the cross on the front of a modest little frame church standing just at the turn. She stole a gance toward her companion and noted that as he came upon the church his face grew suddenly stern, and that he bit his under lip angrily. Barbara did not know about his lady mother. She could not understand why the sight of the church antagonized him. She attributed the look to a dislike of the church for its own sake.

But she soon forgot the church in her delight at the scene which now spread out before her wondering eyes. They drove down a side street marked by a signpost. "Meadow Lane." And underneath, in smaller letters, it said, "To the Town Landing."

"Oh, what an interesting name!" Barbara

cried in delight. "Town Landing! What does it mean, Doctor?"

"It's a charming spot at the end of the Lane," he replied, "where in earlier times there used to be a sort of pier and the townspeople kept their boats and went fishing. There used to be splendid trout in the river. And it was an 'old swimmin' hole,' too. You recall James Whitcomb Riley's poem? Many a good time we had there when I was a boy."

They rolled between fields of clover almost as deep as the car itself, until they came to a neat white cottage with a fence, very tiny, almost like a doll's house, set in the pleasant fields well back from the road. Fence, cottage and garden paths were all in perfect order.

Francis stopped the car and jumped lightly to the ground.

"Home at last!" he said gaily while he assisted Barbara to alight.

Her heart fluttered fast at this moment. She followed close behind him up the prim little walk bordered with orange and yellow nasturtiums. She noted that the hydrangea shrubs were in luxurious leaf and promised a rich store of blossoms by and by. She heard the chirping of meadow frogs near by and fancied that she caught the hoot of an owl.

Oh, it was wonderful in God's own country!

Francis lifted the shining brass knocker representing a lion's head. The sound reverberated through the quiet of the evening. What a peaceful spot! One could almost fancy that the least sound might travel for miles.

There was a quick movement within the doll's house, and a moment after the door was opened by a sweet, prim little old lady, quaint and graceful, done up tightly in a lavender cashmere gown of a fashion long gone by. There was a fussy bit of old lace at her throat, and Barbara saw that although her cheeks were somewhat thin there was just the faintest flush of pink upon them.

She dropped a little old-fashioned curtsy to Barbara and shook Francis warmly by the hand.

"Land alive! It does my heart good to see you, boy! And here's the dear child you've brought! Well, well! If she can be contented here, I'm sure she will be very welcome. It quite delights my old withered heart to—— There, don't shake your head, Francis, for you know it's so! I'm not so young as I used to be, and that's the truth with no mincing of words. Although when I was young they said I was not ill looking. Well, well! It seems as if 'twas only yesterday when your poor dear ma—— Well, well! Go

right into the parlor while I make a cup of tea."

Francis made a droll face at Barbara like a naughty schoolboy; he was beginning to enjoy the situation immensely. Barbara, too, had brightened from the moment that the cottage door opened, revealing this dear delightful old-world mistress who was not unlike the character in a story book.

Barbara returned Francis' look with interest, whereupon they both laughed heartily.

The girl entered the little best room, all fussed up with cosy pillows of all imaginable designs worked in embroideries, with quaint worked mottoes in frames, and with antimacassars on the backs and the arms of the chairs. There were waxed flowers in glass domes and stuffed birds on the mantels, and impossible balls of tissue paper hanging from the most unexpected places. All in all it was part of the story book, and quite carried out the idea of the doll's house. Barbara was half suffocated with pleasure.

The old lady bustled back in a few moments followed by a slip of a colored child with starched gingham stiffly erect on her slim body and creaking at every step she made, and with slim pigtails tightly braided and tied with various bits of colored string.

They carried a tray between them, placed it on a real old gate-legged mahogany table, and handed around the most delicious cups and saucers of real Nippon. Oh, how Barbara's eyes sparkled! Francis, watching her narrowly, grew more and more content with his project. He thought that his little protegée was really very pretty when her face lit up with animation.

"Well, well, it does my heart good," said the little old lady settling herself primly on the very edge of a frail chair of gilt with impossibly slender legs. It was a real doll's chair, thought Barbara, and made up her mind that she should never venture to sit on it for fear of crushing it to pieces. The little lady was so frail, so diminutive that she seemed almost ethereal. The chair suited her and she suited the chair.

Barbara with her own dainty hands helped Francis to a cup of delicious Orange Pekoe tea, and a piece of Mrs. Forest's extra-brand gingerbread with chocolate frosting on the top. Francis laughed as he recalled pleasant memories of days not long passed. "Do you remember, Auntie, how I used to eat the frosting off and leave the cake, once upon a time?"

"Do I remember? Dear heart!" The old lady sighed a little gentle sigh, then brightened again. "Yes, I remember, Francis, as if it were

yesterday. And you used to say that my cup custards and apple sauce were the best ever."

"I'll say they are yet if they're anything like the gingerbread. Auntie, you won't mind giving me another piece, by the way? It's—it's luscious. Nothing like it at the Adams House, or the Touraine either, for that matter. What's the use? We haven't progressed. We've gone backward when we've let salads and sundaes and what not take the place of the old apple 'dowdy' —'member, Auntie, with the crust an inch deep, and built up in a huge earthen dish? Sometimes nowadays when I'm lunching at the Parker House or at the Elks' I let myself imagine that I'm about to sit down to an old-time famous jamboree in your back garden, with the chickens coming up to snatch at the crumbs, and Topsy here a baby—excuse me, Gracie—shooing them away with her checkered apron. Remember how Pauline Metz was a little girl and her mother brought her to visit, and how mad I got when she asked for fingerbowls?" Francis threw back his head and indulged in a hearty laugh.

"I suppose you and Pauline are engaged, aren't you? Come now, it's about time!" The little old lady peered almost jealously into Francis's face.

He colored and looked away. "No," he said

shortly. "We are not engaged. We fight like —I was going to say like cats and dogs. We don't seem to agree on anything. Pauline has peculiar tendencies. I sometimes wonder where she'll end."

Barbara was more deeply interested in this conversation than she cared to show. She recalled the lovely image of Miss Metz, through whose kindly thought she had come to this haven of rest. But for Pauline she would never have encountered Francis. Pauline had spoken of her liking for the Catholic Church. Was that what Francis meant when he said that she had peculiar tendencies? Except for that, was Francis interested in Pauline? From the conversation she judged that they had been friends from childhood. Pauline was a society girl. Francis would probably appeal to her type, and she had referred to her mother's liking for the young physician whose future was so glowing.

Barbara felt suddenly small and insignificant. She even felt a bit miserable. Angry at herself for the inexplicable feeling, she forced herself to remember that she was but a poor and untrained girl, and that this young man had treated her with kind charity, no more.

Barbara could not help feeling amusement when she saw the aristocratic Dr. Somers taking

huge bites out of the homely gingerbread, which was undeniably good. He was almost a boy again for the moment. Barbara's lonely little heart could not help warming to him in spite of Pauline and what she represented.

XIII

THE DOLL'S HOUSE

"AS I was saying to David," Mrs. Forest continued volubly, "the bedstead was just the thing, only the posts were a trifle tarnished. But then I thought of a pot of gilt that I had kept in the stable for just such a purpose, and David fixed it up in a twinkling. Leave it to David. We've put it in Malcolm's room. At first I thought I couldn't bear to have anyone sleep there, but I got over that silly feeling. Like as not 'twill never seem so lonely as when it was unoccupied. And it's the pleasantest room upstairs, although a bit warm at this season."

"I think I told you that Auntie had lost her only son in the war," Francis explained in an aside to the girl.

"Oh!" Barbara's big sympathetic eyes filled with sudden tears. But she said no more, remembering Francis' ideas regarding death.

They drank their tea and ate their gingerbread in silence after that, for the old lady enter-

tained them without effort on their part. She was bright and cheery in spite of her great loss and seemed to lighten by her presence the quaint little room.

At last Francis rose reluctantly to depart.

"I wish that I could stay longer," he said regretfully. "It's so restful here!" He looked straight at Barbara as he spoke, unconsciously looked at her, and she colored.

"I'm glad you find it so," said Mrs. Forest. "You know, most folks when they get to the city lose all taste for the simple things, which are best after all. As I was saying to David—it was the morning that the hens strayed into the currant bushes and I got the letter from —— As I was saying," she rambled on, "I went to the cemetery that afternoon and it rained a few drops on my best bonnet. A few little drops of rain or a few little drops of distrust or unhappiness will ruin anything. Strange, isn't it? As I was saying to David—— Oh, dear me, what was I going to tell you? It was either about the joys of living in the country or 'twas something else. Have you ever met David Lester, Francis? You know he takes care of the Jones place next door. They're abroad, going over the battlefields just now." She paused to wipe away a silent tear. "Maybe they'll pass my boy's grave.

But there is no mark to tell just where it is. I somehow like to think they'll pass by it."

"No, I've never met David," said Francis dryly. He did not feel particularly interested in the Jones' hired man.

"Well, David's a beautiful soul for all he's a Romanist," said the old lady. She was utterly unconscious of the break. Barbara flushed, but said nothing, knowing no offense was intended. Francis bit his lip in characteristic fashion and let the unhappy remark slip. Then Auntie Forest, realizing all of a sudden that Francis's lady mother had died in the Catholic faith and that she slept in the little St. Theodore's burying ground, said, to make a bad matter worse, "Oh, forgive me, Francis. I forgot your poor dear Ma. I'm a garrulous old woman that ought to know how to hold her tongue!"

Barbara felt suddenly interested in the hired man, David Lester. She somehow felt that she was to have an ally in David. David, too, was a Catholic, and if the old lady liked him, spoke so highly of his character, he was worthy to be a friend. David, David. She liked the name, too.

The young slip of moon was swinging idly in the summer sky when Francis stood on the door-step of the cottage with the breath of roses all about him and said good-night. He found it

hard to go. Something in the velvet darkness called to him, something from the quiet fields, from the motionless bells of the flowers, from the far dim sky, from the leaning white stones of God's Acre, from the flowing bosom of the river behind the farm. And—something called to him from the little doll's cottage, in the door of which stood a prim and sweet little lady all fussed up in cashmere and lace and smelling of old lavender and rose.

Behind her and half a head above her, the dark curls shaded the forehead of a young slim girl in a plain white muslin gown which fell in graceful folds about her slender ankles. The young moon played with her curls and over the white brow. Francis said good-night to them both, smiling.

Then he walked quickly down the garden path. The flowers all seemed jumbled together in a great blotch of fading color. The tips of the ancient beech trees were silver in the light of the stars twinkling down the garden path like fireflies.

He looked back and waved his hand once from the car. His last glimpse of the doll's cottage revealed a still, small white face, like a doll's face looking after him down the shadowy road.

Then the cottage door closed.

XIV

CURING THE PHYSICIAN

"I THINK that I'm getting very fond of that little girl," Francis said to his friend, George Barrows, as the two men sat over a quiet pipe in the Doctor's office.

The summer was passing swiftly. The young physician had paid weekly visits to see his little patient at Hillcrest, and had watched her progress along the road to health and happiness. Perhaps, if anything, she was getting along too well, for once or twice she had spoken of her ambition to return to work. Francis had decided that she must remain indefinitely with the widow. Why?

Of late the old quaint town where he had been born and had spent the happy hours of a carefree boyhood, had assumed an altogether undreamed-of importance to him. True, here were enshrined the memories of his devoted mother, and all that remained of her was resting lightly beneath the sod of Hillcrest. Warmed by the

golden sun and sung to by the sweet-voiced birds, in the peace of Christ she slept. Wild vagrant flowers crept over her fair head, and children came sometimes to toddle with unskilled feet over the little couch of her repose. It was altogether a fitting place for her who had longed for rest and had never found it save in the shadow of the Cross.

Francis dutifully visited her grave. Strange and unfamiliar and unloved was the ground which he trod when, turning in at the gate, a wanderer, he found himself among those with whom he could not sympathize. The tall Cross in the middle of the little enclosure flung out friendly imploring arms to him who feared it, and would shun it if he might. Its shadow had fallen darkly on his heart.

George, in the dim light, could barely discern Francis's face as he spoke of the "little girl" of whom he was growing "very fond." Say, rather, whom he loved with all the ardor of a being born for love, for the bright and beautiful things of life, and who, when he once desired, could not bear to be thwarted of his prize. For in the short space of two months Francis had discovered that he desired, that he needed and must have, his little patient all for himself. He must show her the way to love, and divert her mind from those

odd, sometimes morbid fancies, as he termed them, which startled and angered him at times.

"Do you think she knows it?" George asked.

"No, I'm sure that she doesn't. Of course she must one of these days. I fancy that she cares for me, although she's obstinate at times. We have quarreled about—well, about religion and that sort of thing. But Barbara has a great deal to learn, and I fancy that I am a fairly competent teacher."

George was interested, albeit troubled. He listened with the utmost attention to every word of this startling disclosure.

He said of a sudden: "What of Miss Metz? Folks used to think—say——"

Francis turned irritably. "Folks make me tired!" he replied shortly. "They know more about my business than I do, it seems. There was never any sentiment between Pauline and me. And there's less of late."

George waited patiently. Francis continued. "There's decidedly less of late. Pauline has surprised the world by avowing that she's under instruction and intends to enter the Catholic Church. Of course you'll forgive me when I say that she always was obstinate."

George smiled. "Well," he replied, choosing his words carefully, "you've got to be obstinate

when you set out to win a big prize. Miss Metz could hardly expect to obtain it without some strenuous effort, some sacrifice such as, for instance, forfeiting the good opinion of a fascinating young man like you."

Francis was pleased at the implied compliment.

"Barbara's being a Catholic shouldn't stand between us," he said in a burst of confidence.

"Why, that depends."

"Depends! How?" asked Francis angrily.

"On the girl, I mean. Of course if she's a real true Catholic, it will stand between you, believe me! If she were not, why, in that case it wouldn't matter much so far as your success is concerned."

"I wouldn't want my wife to be bound to anything that I disapproved of," Francis said. "Of course, if you're born in the Church and love it and all that, why, you can't see my side."

"Oh!" George smiled sardonically. "Oh! And what about being born out of it and not being able to see the other side?"

"Hum! Oh, what's the use of argument? If she loves me she'll give in."

"Don't be too sure of it, old man," counseled George. "If she gives in, I'll say she's not worthy of you and far from worthy of her

Church. I wish you luck—if your luck is on the right side."

Poor old George! With his daily Mass and his Communions and his Visits to churches on week days when there was—mystery of mysteries!—nobody there, how could he understand that love was a religion all by itself and as such transcended all other? Francis pitied George, whose life, he fancied, must be rather monotonous. George didn't smoke, and when he did he confessed that it made him sick. He didn't go around socially, for he confessed himself happier with his "Vita Nuova" and his visionary Beatrice. The Blessed Virgin, Francis supposed she was. Odd old chap, George.

"Now, just to-day," Dr. Somers went on, "something happened that made me dislike the Church even more. We had a case at the hospital, and I was to operate. There was no time to be lost, for the disease was making headway every instant. The patient was a young man of, say, twenty-five. We got him ready and were about to administer the anaesthetic when, lo and behold, he sat bolt upright and refused to allow any further proceedings until someone should send for a priest. Why he hadn't decided on that matter before I'm sure nobody could tell.

"As it happened, the chaplain was away from

home. It might take fifteen minutes or more for a priest to arrive, and every second counted in this case. The poison was working through the system. We argued, but to no use. The obstinate chap was resolved to have the priest and die! Well, the priest came, a young man like myself, and everyone had to clear out of the room. It was some moments before the job was done, whatever it was. The patient——"

"Got well?" George asked, hopeful that the Viaticum had effected a miracle in this event.

"Got well! He died, of course. Of course. But he seemed satisfied to die after that, so we couldn't disappoint him. To me it was a case of clear suicide, for those fifteen minutes killed him, I maintain. Nine chances out of ten, had we performed the operation immediately, he would have lived. I call it a tomfool act. He could have gone through with that performance with the priest afterward."

"But let us suppose there would be no afterwards," suggested George. "What then?"

"Well, then he'd die, I suppose. But I don't believe it would have made much difference anyhow."

"That chap probably obtained the peculiar grace of what we term a deathbed repentance, Francis," George said. "And he didn't dare re-

fuse it. Thank God he didn't! Maybe he had been devout to the Blessed Virgin during his careless life, and she saw to it that he died right. It was a close call, though, I'll say."

Francis thought of the little medal at that moment lying in his pocket. He wondered what George would say if he knew it was there. Poor funny old George! How many women would give much to say they had received a compliment from his lips! How many vainly sought to attract his admiration! And they were worsted because of—Beatrice. The Blessed Virgin, in other words. An ideal Lady who, possibly, did not exist. Francis was almost amused at his friend's perfect unworldliness in this very worldly twentieth century.

"I don't doubt but that after having received the sacraments the poor chap—the lucky chap, I should say—was ready to die, was quite resigned to it; that if he could have had his choice between a reckless life such as that he had been living, and this newborn peace with God, he would have chosen peace—and death."

Dr. Somers looked up quickly, while a puzzled expression came over his countenance.

Peace and death! He remembered his mother with a recollection that was fraught with anguish. He whispered to his heart: "My

mother! With your great, your burning love, where are you? For you seem more distant from me because of the mystery which surrounded your deathbed, which shut me out from perfect understanding with you. I hardly dare to think that I shall ever see you again. I do not know what I believe except—that all things are a contradiction and an abyss of desolation."

"The Catholic conception of death is very consoling, very beautiful," George was saying. He drew from his pocket a small, flat, leather-bound copy of the Daily Missal. Turning to the Mass for the Faithful Departed, he read in Latin:

"Brethren, behold I speak a mystery to you. We shall all rise again, but we shall not all be changed. For death is absorbed in victory. Where is thy victory, O Death? Where is thy sting?"

"Do you know the Dies Irae?" George asked. And upon the confession of Francis' ignorance of this beautiful and touching prayer, George recited a few stanzas for him:

Think, O Jesus, for what reason
Thou enduredst earth's spite and treason;
Nor me lose in that dread season.
Seeking me, thy worn feet hasted,
On the cross thy soul death tasted;
Let not all these toils be wasted.

Francis, lover of beauty, was won by the singular pathos of the lines. The ringing of the office bell brought to an end the sober conversation of the two friends.

When they parted at the door they spoke the commonplaces that men usually speak. But in Francis' soul rang a pleading cry that would not be silenced:

"Let not all these toils be wasted!"

After the patient had departed, he took his hat and strolled out into the soft summer night.

Far away the moon sailed amid the baby clouds that hung like cherubs about the halo of an old saint. How wonderful the heavens were to-night! Francis lifted his hat once, for he was not wholly pagan, and murmured: "Quam admirabile. . . ."

He walked rapidly down Green Street, past the West End Branch of the Public Library where a group of bookworms bent over their newspapers and magazines. He stumbled over numerous small urchins on the sidewalk and came finally to the door of old St. Joseph's Church.

It was Saturday night and nearly nine o'clock. He hoped that the church would not be locked.

It was not locked.

Francis entered and descended the steps into

the basement. The interior was somewhat dim, but up at the altar and the shrines a few tapers were burning. He sank into one of the rear benches in a corner and, as once before, in the old Franciscan Church in the North End, waited.

The altar was wrapped about in peace. On the altar cover was a single word, embroidered in gold thread: Jesus.

Suddenly Francis discovered a familiar figure, a face that he knew. Yes, there was no mistaking the young monk near the altar, holding the lovely Child, who this time was robed in a tunic of Our Lady's own blue. His arms were outstretched to caress the divine Boy; his pure and lovely eyes gazed straight into the heavenly Countenance. It was the same young monk. There could be no mistake.

What his name was, where he had lived, and how long ago, Francis did not know. Suddenly he wished that he did know.

Then he became aware that he was not alone in the old church. For up near the altar, at either side, solitary dark figures were silhouetted against the figures of the confessionals. Now and then a slight clicking sound, as of a slide moving softly, caught Francis' ear.

He looked attentively in the direction whence issued the sound and saw that a figure emerged

from one of the shadowy recesses and advanced to the sanctuary rail. Another figure proceeded into the confessional, taking the place of the first.

The person at the railing was an aged man. He bowed in reverent adoration or supplication for some minutes, then walked, or rather limped, down the center aisle and past the bench where Francis sat in the shadow of a post. In his hand was a tin luncheon box such as night watchmen or laborers carry to their work. His garments were neat and clean, although they had seen long service and here and there were patched. The old man was not particularly refined, but as he walked down the aisle in the light of the electric lamps there was a certain quiet dignity stamped upon his furrowed face. Whatever was his story, whatever his hopes, his joys or sorrows, he had very evidently found strength and peace back there behind the curtain of the confessional—much-maligned institution, which those without the true fold took such infinite pains to disparage without knowing whereof they spoke. Truly, it would seem to one watching like Dr. Somers in the basement of the old church tonight, that those who really practiced going to Confession got something out of it after all! And if so, what business had the rest of the world to find fault?

So twenty minutes passed. Men and women and young children went quietly in and out, some of them carrying grotesque bundles, their Saturday night's shopping. They went reverently about the tremendous business which had brought them here. Uniformly they made their brief preparation, disappeared into the confessionals, where they remained for a longer or shorter time as the case might be, came forth with shining faces, and went up to the altar, where they knelt beneath a flickering red lamp and prayed. These faithful souls represented the leper who, being made clean, returned to give thanks to God.

For the most part the penitents were common, ordinary everyday people, who had many burdens to bear in these days of stress, because of the high cost of living and the materialism that raged about them on every side. But with might and main they were striving to hold fast that which they had, the precious heritage of a priceless Faith.

One salient fact impressed itself especially on the mind of the lone watcher in the rear of the church. It was the solidity of the doctrine, the uniformity of the practice which these people carried out. Here all the worshipers went about their sacred duty without appearing to take note

of one another, in the same quiet, dignified way. There was no hesitation, no interchange of salutations, no appearance of haste. All was evidently done in comformity to a law which they thoroughly understood and which bound all in the selfsame way.

A priest came forth from one of the confessionals. He walked slowly up and down the church a few times. By now the last penitent had departed, and he waited lest some belated soul might need his help before the church was closed for the night. The priest was a young man with a fine, noble face, which, now in the strong light, looked rather fatigued and worn.

It had just dawned on Francis' mind that it was a warm evening to be closed up in a narrow and uncomfortable space, listening to worrisome tales of trouble, of distress and of sin—when he found that a kind voice was saying close to him:

"I beg your pardon. Would you like to go to Confession before the priests leave?" He fancied that Francis was a troubled soul who had strayed into the church trying to find strength and peace. Perchance he had been a long time away from the Sacraments and had by a miracle of grace strayed into God's house to-night.

"No, thank you." Francis rose awkwardly.

The priest was a trifle disappointed. He

feared resistance to God's grace was working in this soul. He said in a gentle tone, "You do not belong to this parish?"

"No, Father. I'm not a Catholic."

"Oh, please pardon me. I'm sorry if I intruded. But you see, sometimes persons come in late like this and the priest goes away before they have time to make their Confession. I thought that you might have. . . ."

The priest accompanied Francis to the vestibule. He stood in the doorway for a moment, hoping that this young man might speak.

Francis said: "I realize that I was intruding. But I wasn't exactly spying on you." The priest smiled. "While I do not like the Catholic Church—you will pardon my frankness—it interests me strangely. You see, Father, I lost someone dear to me a short while ago. Before she died she was received into the Catholic Church. When I arrived at her bedside she was gone. So I never understood just why—but I've wondered why—she did that. It seems to me that there must have been some influence at work. For my mother was a Methodist. It was my father's church, and, so far as I have any, it was mine. In life my mother never, to my knowledge, entered a Catholic Church."

"Your mother must have known a great deal

about the Church," the priest said quietly. "She must have thought about it a very great deal. There is a strong probability that she had been fighting grace for a long time. And when suddenly death faced her, she knew there was no time to be lost. It is not an uncommon thing in the history of conversions."

Then, with a winning smile, the priest continued: "The Catholic Church, you see, as Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, 'is a very good Church in which to live, but the best in which to die.' It and it alone offers to the soul in the last extremities the strength and consolation which are sorely needed at that hour. I should be pleased to talk further with you about —your mother, if you care to call, at any time."

Francis thanked the kind young priest and found himself a moment later walking along the street.

"I wonder what George would say if he could have seen me a few moments ago!" he said to himself.

XV

A BREATH OF INCENSE

"AND then," said Francis, drinking in eagerly the details of Barbara's sweet childlike face, "what did you do?"

"Why," she answered slowly, settling herself more comfortably in the depths of a big arm-chair, "why, I thought that I had read the note wrong at first. You see, I had been looking for work for so long, and I had suffered so much! I never dreamed that life could be so hard or that I could be so tired of it. For a moment I felt almost as if I were dying and that everything was vanishing about me. The whole world was spinning around and around like a big top. I did not know where to turn. I dreaded to go back to the place where I boarded and face that little attic room. For how was I to get the wherewithal to live? You see, things look very black when you've tried your best and failed. Even the faintest ray of hope is something. But things looked very black just then. And now see how happy I am! God has been very good

to me." She flushed as she spoke the last sentence, reverently.

Francis replied seriously: "Yes, you're certainly happy now, if I am to judge by appearances. You've improved wonderfully, little girl. Life is strange, I'll say. I've often wondered if bleak hopeless days come to everyone. I imagine that they do. But to see certain people, you'd never say they had anything to suffer in their whole lives. And yet they must suffer; it's the inexorable law."

"No one can escape," said Barbara pensively. "But at the time of our own trial our miserable small sorrows seem the most stupendous thing, the most tragic in all the world, and it is terribly hard to see beyond them. Tell me, did you ever read the Imitation?"

"I can't say that I've read it," Francis replied. He knew that Thomas à Kempis was an old Catholic monk, and as such he fancied him to be a dreamer, a visionary.

"There are wonderful things for our consolation in that book, which is a world classic," Barbara said sweetly. "I've often thought that if there were but one book in the whole wide world, and that book were the Imitation, we would find all the philosophy necessary and good for us. For it tells us how to be happy in the

midst of the cares and trials of this world, and how to find peace in pain."

"I don't think perfect peace can be found," said Francis, who was brooding since Barbara had mentioned the little book. "Now, for instance, look at the amount of physical pain men have to undergo. The ending of life's journey is infinitely worse than the beginning or the middle. What is more painful than to watch the slow decay of the body, the gradual disintegration of its mechanism, the dissolution of its parts? I can never understand why we must suffer. I could never see that it is a blessing to mankind, as some of your——" he was about to say "old monks and what not believed and taught"—"as some people would have us believe. To begin with, one starts out in life helpless. It is some years before one really lives, so to speak. And then, just as life is beginning to open out as a wonderful gift and just when the body is at the zenith of its powers and the intellect its own master, one begins to fall apart!

"Teeth, hair, limbs begin to fail us. There are pains and aches which are but the beginning of what is to come. We feel that we are commencing to lose power. Memory forsakes us, and so on. It's a pitiful spectacle, and I confess it's beyond me if this is calculated to make men

content and happy. In fact I've sometimes wondered if life is really worth while."

Barbara's earnest little face was lifted eagerly to the face of the man before her. A little prayer to the Holy Spirit of Truth and of Light rose to her lips.

In the depths of the big armchair she was curled up like a soft little flower in its pod, so it seemed to Dr. Somers. She had never looked quite so lovely to his admiring eyes as now.

She was wishing that she might show him the true meaning of this earthly life and the philosophy of eternity. She said, "Of course it is hard to suffer and die. It is hard to see those whom we love go from us. But not so hard, is it, when we consider that this life is not all? Thomas à Kempis speaks very beautifully and truly of this: 'Should not all things hard and difficult be borne for eternal life?' The reward will be so much greater as there are labors and pains to be undergone. The saints tell us so, and even Our Lord Himself. Of course, it is very hard to suffer. But one need not suffer alone."

Francis thought, "What an extraordinary girl! At an age when others like her are thinking of dress, of the theater, of marriage, she is thinking of Eternal Life! I wonder if there are many girls like her in the world! I doubt it."

"But you were telling me about the day when you found the note of dismissal in your pay envelope," he said. "Was it easy to face the world, the future, even with your faith and trust?"

"Not easy. No. It was very hard." Barbara spoke in very low tones of her old sorrow. "But surely there would be no merit in it; it would not be a cross, if it were easy to bear. But now I understand how all these trials were for my good, and how God rewards trust in Him."

"Tell me," he said, for he was weary of hearing about spiritual things, "are you quite contented here?"

"Yes. I have been very happy. Lately I have obtained a little embroidery to do, although Mrs. Forest scolds about it all the time. She says that my companionship is quite enough to repay her for her kindness. But I know that I am not much company for anyone. I don't know very much. I can only fill a little obscure niche, and even then but poorly."

"That's nonsense," said Francis crossly. "You do a great deal of good in the world by just——" He was about to say "by just being so very pretty to look at," when he stopped—"by just being cheerful and contented. You know we need people who are happy, in the everyday world, where there are so many imag-

inary troubles that Mrs. Grundy herself would be amply satiated."

"I know that Mrs. Forest was pained," Barbara smiled mischievously, "when she discovered that I am a Catholic. She said 'Oh dear me!' in such a sorry tone that I burst out laughing."

Francis listened attentively, for the subject of Barbara's religion interested him very much.

"I—she has to bear a great deal with me," she went on. "The first time she saw my little Crucifix on the wall I thought that she was going to faint. She said: 'Oh, my dear! I'm sure, if it is any comfort to you to have it there, I'll not bother you in any way. But it's the first time to my knowledge that an object of the sort has ever entered this house, where four generations were Methodist ministers. It—excuse me—it quite took my breath away.' "

"What did you say?" Francis made an odd grimace, remembering the Crucifix that had rested in his dead mother's hands, as if it had always belonged there.

"I offered to remove it and to cherish it privately if she found it so distasteful. For after all it is her house and her wall. And I can love my little Crucifix wherever it is. But she was a perfect lady. She said, 'Oh, dear, no! Not for the world! This is a free country, my dear! Our

forefathers came here to obtain the right to worship as they saw fit. We must be consistent.' "

"I thought that I heard you singing a hymn one night, Auntie," I said. 'Simply to Thy Cross I Cling.' "

" 'Why, yes, so you did,' she said. 'It's a favorite with me, and number two in the hymn book. But as for having a cross on the wall, I never thought of it. I suppose I have been inconsistent.'

"So it ended," concluded Barbara, "by the Crucifix remaining there on the wall. It hasn't hurt anything so far as I can see." She rather enjoyed tantalizing Francis for the moment. The return to better health had enlivened Barbara's spirits.

"I went to the city one day," she said shyly after a brief silence.

"Indeed? And why did you go that stifling atmosphere when you are getting on so nicely? I thought that I told you not to go near the city for awhile, at least until the cool weather."

Barbara thought that he could be very unreasonable when he was so disposed. And being very much of a woman, she could retaliate.

"I wanted to see the familiar places, the places

where I had spent some happy months of my life," she replied.

"And where did you go?" he asked without a smile.

"I"—how cross he looked!—"I went past the place where I used to live on Newton Street. I went around by the rear so that I could look up to the little window where I worked and dreamed. It gave me much pleasure to go back."

He laughed a bit scornfully. He was angry with her for disobeying his directions. "You surely didn't expect to find things greatly changed in a couple of months?"

"I don't know."

Francis could not read a woman's sensitive heart. He did not know that this girl's was a deep, quiet nature, capable of intense joy and of intense suffering. He wounded her, not meaning to.

"And where else did you go?" A vague jealous fear smote him. He knew that she would tell the whole truth, and he waited.

"Why—why, I went to church. Nearby. It was nice to steal into the quiet chapel and to see again the holy things that I loved so much."

"But you could go to St. Theodore's," said Francis with a scowl. "It's all the same, isn't it?"

"Yes and no. It's the same, and yet, you see, it's not quite the same. I used to go to the Church of the Immaculate Conception, and the altar, the shrines, everything, were especially dear to me. You see, when you have got used to carrying all your little joys and sorrows to one little spot and laying them before the feet of One who understands, why it's a sort of trysting place between you and Him."

"And—him?"

"Our Lord, I mean."

"Oh!" He was singularly relieved. "Well, I'm sorry that you didn't obey my instructions. Patients of mine usually do. Otherwise I'm not responsible for the outcome. You are not too strong, and I don't approve of you poking around old musty buildings where nobody knows how many germs are waiting to be caught up."

"I'm not afraid of germs," Barbara said stubbornly.

They did not seem to get on well together that evening. Francis questioned the girl no further, for he saw that it was useless. But something told him that she had gone to Confession in the old church. This fact seemed to remove her just a trifle farther from him, and made him more wretched.

Happily, Barbara remembered that music

possessed charms to soothe savage breasts. She took her place at the little melodeon and sang from memory the air "Absent."

"My eyes grow dim with tenderness the while,
Thinking I see thee, thinking I see thee smile."

A tear glistened in Francis' eye. The song had the effect of making him more unhappy. For once his visit to Hillcrest seemed to be a failure.

The sweet birdlike voice sang on until it died away, sinking to a low whisper on the last word. In the kitchen the little mistress of the house wept silently into her checkered apron, recalling one who in the bright flush of perfect manhood had gone bravely away to the sound of fife and drums, to return no more, but to find his rest in a far-off field where poppies grow.

The young physician, sitting stiffly in the old horsehair-covered chair, was wondering dully what was the matter with the afternoon. From the window he caught up the sweet rare scent of new-mown hay. Away down at the end of the widow's lot a tall stalwart figure was merrily swinging a scythe. Francis wondered if it was David Lester,—David who, Auntie Forest had said, was a "beautiful soul." David was a Catholic. He wondered if Barbara had held

many conversations with him, and if so what was the nature of them.

Francis drove away in the deepening dusk, disconsolate. Passing by the open door of St. Theodore's little chapel, he suddenly stopped the car and jumped out. He could not seem to pass a Catholic church of late without going in. Why?

He had not entered the chapel since the morning of his mother's Requiem. Now, in the soft twilight, it was very appealing. The red lamp swung before the tabernacle. There was no other light. Francis dropped into the last bench and again waited.

And again nothing happened.

There was no faint suggestion of the busy workaday world in this hallowed retreat. It was distinctively God's house and the Gate of Heaven. Francis saw the plain little gold door on the altar and vaguely wondered What was behind it. He caught the scent of old-fashioned garden flowers and the breath of incense.

Strange to say, although there was no other worshiper in the quiet solitude, he suddenly knew that he was not alone.

Somebody else was there!

Who?

XVI

THE OLD BUZZ WAGON

DAVID LESTER, cutting the tall meadow grass, paused to dry the moisture from his face and to look away toward the sweet-scented stacks of hay piled up against the horizon.

From the adjoining cottage, he saw a little figure coming toward him, clad in a pink-and-white gingham dress and swinging a large garden hat by the strings.

David felt something strange and sweet tug at his heartstrings. Barbara was very winsome, and he was by no means unresponsive to dainty things.

He had watched Barbara closely since her advent to the cottage. He had grown to look for her coming through the orchard or garden, and to feel a trifle disappointed when she did not appear. Once or twice he had dropped into the cottage on errands, and on such occasions he had the satisfaction of hearing the loquacious old

lady discourse of the girl whom she had grown to love in so short a time.

David had spoken on numerous occasions to Barbara, and their conversation had been extremely natural. He felt that he had always known her, that he had been waiting for her to come to Hillcrest. Why? He did not know.

David could not help wondering about the visits of the young physician; he was certainly very much interested in Barbara. It was not surprising on the whole, and David thought that Dr. Somers showed very good taste.

He determined to overcome his propensity to shyness and to be more at ease with the girl who was disposed to be so friendly.

So when she drew near, he took off his ragged-brimmed hat and smiled. Barbara thought that he was very handsome when his face lighted up that way.

He said: "Good afternoon. I trust that you are enjoying yourself at Hillcrest, Miss Barbara."

It was commonplace enough, and yet David was anything but commonplace. Big and awkward he might be, but ordinary he certainly was not. In fact the girl keenly felt that "here was a man." He was much more generously propor-

tioned than the aristocratic young physician. His face was more open and his smile more frequent. They were strangely dissimilar when the girl mentally compared them.

"Oh, I'm having such a beautiful time!" she replied. "I hate to think of ever going back." And she continued, gazing frankly into his face, so that he dropped his eyes: "Everyone here has been so kind to me!"

David knew that she understood how much he wished to be useful to her. He knew that she appreciated the fresh-cut flowers that he gathered in the early morning for her place at the breakfast table, that she appreciated his handiwork on the little white iron bed, and other things. It was an understood thing that he was to provide for her little wants.

"I think I understand," he said quietly. "When things are going smoothly, or, in other words, when the sun is bright in the heavens and there are but a few bits of feathery cloud up there," he pointed far up toward the radiant canopy of blue that hung over the quiet landscape, "why, sometimes we begin to think the rain is not far off. We are more or less like the weather, don't you think?"

"Yes. Wasn't it St. Ignatius who said that in security we ought to prepare for trouble, just

as an act of foresight if nothing else? The saints understood so well!"

Barbara knew that David was deeply religious, for she had heard Mrs. Forest often speak of his piety and strong Christian manhood in terms of the greatest respect. The girl had watched him from her little bedroom window, going along the lonely white country road every evening, with his clothes nicely brushed and a look of quiet contentment in the very set of his broad shoulders. David was wonderfully good to look at when, after the toil on the farm, he was all cleaned and brushed—and shined, as Auntie Forest said.

David made Barbara think of a priest. For one thing he went to pay an evening visit whether it rained or was moonlight. She had grown accustomed to peering eagerly out from her little window until she saw the tall erect form emerge in the drowsy garden where the flowers slept, and turn down by the gate.

She felt that David, in spite of his goodness, was a lonely soul—one of those who, because of the very beauty of their souls, must suffer from the crudeness of life, must suffer from the homesickness of those who, living as pilgrims and wanderers in a far country, sigh unceasingly for their own, must suffer from other men and

women, from the frailty of this poor weak human body, which is at times so leaden a casket for the precious and delicate pearl of the soul.

"St. Ignatius was right," David replied. "Life's a strange puzzle at times. Don't you think so? No matter what station of life we may occupy or how successful we may be, whether loving friends surround us or whether we are alone, there are times when we seem apart from all, even from our own selves. I suppose it's hardly wise to dwell on such thoughts, for they're apt to make us sad. Life's too short, and we can't live it over again."

"It helps to think of spiritual things, doesn't it?" Barbara asked. "Oh, David, if only the whole world had the consolation, the certainty which we have, it would be a far different world. I've often thought, when I was working in the city, that it was a vast, seething hive of restless, ambitious, discontented, irresponsible people. They seemed to be drifting without anchor. Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke of this very thing. 'To reach the port of heaven we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it; but we must sail, and not drift nor lie at anchor.' David, did you ever think you'd like to be a priest?"

"Why"—he looked away while a pained ex-

pression crept into his fine eyes—"I—well, you see, I never had the chance—for the things that are necessary, the education and all that. Now I'm too old, if I did have a chance. And I'm not sure that I'd ever dare to aspire so high. I'm not at all sure that I'd make a fervent priest—holy enough, I mean. I'd rather just be a hired man unless I could be a saint. Maybe that I'm all right as it is; only sometimes, as you say, there are feelings that come——"

"David," Barbara wondered at her temerity, "David, you mustn't drift! You mustn't! It would be dreadful, after all you have been given. You see, you are different from most people I have met. Something seems to tell me that you——" David raised his head with a quick characteristic movement and looked straight into her eyes. "You see, something seems to tell me that you—belong to God!"

There was perfect stillness in the summer fields. The trees bent a little nearer to earth, so it seemed, and the dainty flowers stopped shivering in the light winds to listen to the beating of two very human hearts. There was something distinctly supernatural in the atmosphere, as long ago in Paradise, when the Lord walked among His own.

David drew the torn brim of his hat a little

over his eyes as if to shade them from the sun. His strong brown hands trembled a little, hands that were used to the hard, rude toil of the fields. But Barbara liked those strong well-shaped hands, that somehow reminded her of the old monks, who in past ages as now cultivated the vineyards, and taught men the singular beauty and dignity of toil.

"That's strange," he said quietly. "For I've sometimes felt that way myself. But I'm what you see me, just a hired man. I couldn't be anything else. I know how to plant potatoes and to prepare the soil, how to milk and all that. But that's about all."

The girl felt that here was the avowal of a tremendous tragedy. It was but one more story of a soul that had been left behind in the mad eager rush of life. Out of its sphere, fitted for something higher, yearning for it, and nobody seemed to care. "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world," but it was hard to realize it sometimes.

"David, tell me—did you ever hear of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez?" Barbara asked sweetly. She cherished a tender devotion toward the saintly old Lay Brother of the Society of Jesus.

"No, I don't think I ever did."

Barbara spoke breathlessly. "He was a won-

derful character. He is very near and dear to me. He was a Spaniard by birth whom God marked early for His Own. When he was a very little child they used to find him hiding a picture of Our Lady in his breast. When he entered the Society of Jesus he was apparently broken down, above the usual age, and seemed almost useless. But the Father who received him said that he really felt obliged to admit him as a saint. Oh, it was wonderful! He suffered terribly from constant temptations and interior trials. But he used also to enjoy such consolations in spite of all that sometimes he would be forced to cry out, 'Enough, O Lord!' like Xavier.

"He was a porter at the Jesuit College for many years. His very appearance, as he went along so quietly and gravely to open or shut the door, impressed all. He used to say, every time he heard the bell ring, 'I am coming, Lord!' Would you like him, do you think, David?"

"Yes. Very much. Strange that I never heard of him before! He seems to appeal to me, Miss Barbara, as you speak so sweetly of him. It seems as if he was more like myself in some ways. He was just a sort of hired man, wasn't he? That is, God's hired man?"

"Yes, he was like you," the girl replied. "I

remember something else about him. Sometimes when he heard the bell he would say, 'Lord, I must open the door to thee, for love of thee!' And then he went quickly and joyously to open it."

"That's really beautiful," David replied reverently. "Now I've sometimes talked to God, here in the fields. I've asked Him to protect and guard the baby seeds and to send the rain, and sometimes I've considered my own soul in comparison with the hard, hot soil. And I've come to the conclusion that my life's been mostly barren."

Barbara reproached him with a glance of her soft bright eyes. She was glad to find one to whom she could speak freely. She continued: "St. Alphonsus lived to be eighty-five years of age. Fifty-four of them were spent in the great work of perfecting his soul for Heaven. Those who recited the prayers at his deathbed said that he conducted himself just as if he were merely going to change his room. So he died. Oh, David, you'd appreciate his beautiful life! I've got the book, and I'd be pleased to lend it to you. Auntie Forest found it beneath my pillow one day and read a bit, I think. For she afterward said, 'My dear, he seems to have been a rather nice sort of person. He reminds me of David.'

I laughed. I couldn't help it, although I think she was right," Barbara said boldly.

David changed the subject by saying, "How would you like to come for a little ride this afternoon? Of course," his face drooped somewhat as he recalled Francis Somers' beautiful car—"Of course, Miss Barbara, it's only an old buzz wagon, but if you think that you wouldn't mind —of course, there's no very grand style here at Hillcrest."

"I'd just love it, David," Barbara replied, clapping her hands. "I'll tell Auntie. And I won't forget about the book."

The girl felt strangely happy as she fairly flew back to the cottage and smoothed her hair and put on a simple white muslin gown in place of the checked gingham. She felt very much at ease with David since half an hour ago.

She was serenely at peace as they drove along slowly over the rugged ground, where sometimes a mild inquisitive cow looked out in friendly fashion from behind a gray stone wall, and sometimes a brood of chickens would take to flight in a cloud of fine white dust.

David was very clean and strong and handsome as he sat beside Barbara at the wheel. His fine honest face was turned toward the distant horizon line, and his brown hand, with stalwart

muscles standing out, guided the old buzz wagon securely over its uneven bed.

They passed old farm cottages settled peacefully in the pleasant fields, and patches of green and yellow woods, and small rustic bridges flung across tiny brooks, and old boulders jutting out like sentinels in the lonely road. Ordinary things, one and all, such as one sees at every turn in the country. But to Barbara they were more beautiful because she enjoyed them with a kindred soul. It made her strangely happy to feel that she had unlocked the door of this great sober giant's heart and found within a wide and clean-swept room waiting to be garnished. David had shyly confessed to her that he was sometimes lonely!

She wove girlish fancies as she now and then stole a side glance into his face. There seemed to be no need of conversation just then.

Life was strange! For here was a man of her own station in life, a fervent Christian, a gentleman, one who would tenderly cherish anything which he took for his own possession. Something had drawn them together from the uttermost ends of the earth, as it seemed. Why? For Barbara felt that what might be was not to be. Perhaps she might grow to care for David, and she thought that she might easily teach him

to care in return for her. Why not? It was the strange inexplicable mystery of life. She only knew it was not to be.

The thought of Dr. Somers brought a little pang of fear and sorrow. She knew so well that he was obstinate, self-willed, somewhat conceited, that he was not a Catholic. And yet she could not drop the thought of him. In this way lay a hard path before her; perchance intense suffering. And yet life had her in its powerful grip. Time would tell.

They turned in at the gate of the little God's Acre, and David assisted her to dismount. They walked very near to each other up the quiet sunlit paths tended by gentle and loving hands.

They passed the graves of little children who like the angels had flown quickly to God. Barbara vaguely wondered whether it were not better to have a fate like theirs—to be plucked securely by the Celestial Gardener before the waxen petals began to droop against the cold blasts of a wintry world.

They passed the graves of the very aged, those who had tottered to heaven on feet made leaden by the length of the journey and the hardness of the road. They passed the graves of young mothers and maidens, of youths and of strong men. Barbara felt instinctively that she trod on

holy ground, and drew closer to the stalwart reverent figure at her side.

They found the grave of Auntie Forest's husband, who had been suddenly killed in a stone quarry, in the non-Catholic enclosure separated from the Catholic cemetery by a low iron fence. Barbara read thankfully: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

"But I shall not see her again." The words came like a dark shadow stealing over the gentle heart of the girl. She recalled the solitary drive with Dr. Somers to Hillcrest and the memory of that unfortunate remark was fresh in her mind. He had missed the one thing necessary, the one beautiful, all-important thing, which this young stalwart hired man in the coarse tweed suit and straw hat that had weathered many summers, who stood beside her possessed! Life was strange.

It was very sweet and peaceful in God's Acre. The afternoon sunshine fell tenderly on the green moss creeping over the stones, hiding the names and inscriptions of many who slept.

They walked on like two children. David had taken off his hat and bared his head to the cooling breeze. Barbara noted how tall and fine he was, how noble and manly. She unconsciously contrasted him with another. She saw again the

slight shorter figure, the pale somewhat scornful face, the sensitive mouth and the laughing eyes that veiled interior shadows in their velvet depths.

David's bronze curls clustered over a high and splendid forehead. His mouth was firm and well shaped, but not obstinate.

David was speaking of Mrs. Forest. Barbara aroused herself in time to catch the drift of his remarks.

He was saying, "She ought to be a Catholic, for she has a wonderful faith, a wonderful heart. She just doesn't understand the Church, that's all."

Again a sad refrain awoke in Barbara's soul. "He does not understand." She did not refer to David. Would he ever understand?

They placed a fragrant knot of garden flowers on the grave of Auntie Forest's dead, then passed through the gate to the other side, where in the shadow of the cross those of the favored flock were sleeping.

There was a grave near the main path newly sodded. "It's his mother's grave," said David, and then bit his lip angrily because he had faltered in pronouncing Dr. Somers' name. If he really cared for Barbara, David wished him well. He was not jealous, but he feared for the

outcome of what might prove to be a bitter struggle.

Standing quietly by Barbara's side as if he had always belonged there, David looked toward the distant highway, and with a sudden swelling of the heart saw a handsome car dashing along the white road in the direction of Meadow Lane.

XVII

DAYS AT THE OLD HOME

"BUT I care for her, Auntie," Francis said, with something like a sob. He sat with the little old lady in the prim best room with its horsehair furnishings and its stuffed birds. Barbara and David were still in the cemetery, or perchance they had gone a little way along the quiet country road to enjoy the sweetness of the atmosphere.

Mrs. Forest was quiet for a few moments. Then she said quietly: "Well, Francis, I don't know what to tell you. There's only one thing—her religion."

He tossed his head impatiently. "Oh, that will be all right. She's stubborn. If she really cares for me—— You think that she does?" He waited eagerly for the answer.

"I think—that she does. You know, there are ways of reading a woman's heart—a young maiden's heart—when one has grown as old as I am. It's a deep, deep thing, Francis, the heart, and especially the heart of a woman. It is a

strong and courageous thing, that has an almost unlimited capacity for pain and suffering, especially if these be borne for someone whom it loves. But it is also a sensitive, delicate thing, an instrument whose strings, sweetly attuned, are easily brought into discord or even broken. And then there is little remedy for the damage. It is difficult to repair. Only a very clever and skillful workman can undo the damage. And then sometimes the old wound remains beneath the repair. Barbara is a fervent Catholic, my dear; while you——"

She paused, and glanced keenly toward him.

He colored and looked away. "I'm not a religious man, you mean. But you know, Auntie, that I'm not a bad man. No one can ever say that I committed a gross error of any kind."

"You're too proud, for one thing," the old woman replied. "Pride, my dear boy, is your besetting sin. Don't take it ill if I speak frankly to you. Barbara is a gentle, fragile flower, but beneath all her tenderness is a staunch will. I fear that you are going to be very unhappy before you finish with her."

"Oh, I'm not afraid."

"That's just the trouble. I could wish that you were afraid of a few things. We can't be too sure of ourselves in this world. But come.

I'll do what I shouldn't—I'll take you up to the dear child's little room, and then you can better judge for yourself the interior life which she is leading. I declare to you it has quite altered my views. At first I used fairly to shudder every time she blessed herself at meals. It seemed grotesque and superstitious to me. But when Barbara explained it so sweetly, I thought better of it. For when one comes down to the fine point, why despise the cross on which the dear Saviour stretched out His arms and died for us? Many other things that I used to abhor in the Catholic religion I now see are really reasonable and quite simple if one looks at them from an unbiased view. Not that I shall ever for one moment be anything but a good Methodist. But I've come to the conclusion that to be good Christians we must all live according to the light of our individual consciences. To revile and persecute those who do not believe as we do, but honestly and consistently follow some other line of thought, is very far from Christian, that's all."

"You're wonderful, Auntie," the young man said as he followed her up the narrow and crooked stairs.

"I'm only an ignorant old woman, so don't call me wonderful," she replied. "But I'm not a pagan and I don't intend to make others miser-

able because of my opinions if I can help it. Maybe that I'm all wrong about the Church, and that some day I shall wake up to find that I made a terrible mistake not to look into her doctrines in this life. Who knows?"

Francis stood reverently on the threshold of the tiny blue-and-white chamber with its simple white cot, its dainty muslin curtains and its air of peace and security.

He looked curiously about. Over the bed was a very lifelike Crucifix of ivory. The Head, slightly inclined, was crowned with realistic thorns. About the Crucifix Barbara's deft and loving small fingers had woven honeysuckle blossoms, whose fragrance was wafted to the nostrils of the young man. The same dainty hands had made a soft little mat of fern leaves beneath the sacred Body where it rested on its hard bed. The Divine Martyr reposed on a cushion of flowers.

Francis was touched, but not deeply. He thought that Barbara was an emotional little being and capable of great depths of feeling.

The figure on the Cross did not, however, repel him as had the same image which he had seen in his dead mother's hands. The reproachful eyes seemed to yearn toward him as if the suffering Victim said: "What did I ever do to you that you should so dislike me?"

"I'm sure," said the little old lady, interrupting his meditations, "I don't see anything out of the way in the flowers if she wishes to put them there. For, come to think of it, I've always put flowers on Malcolm's picture in the sitting-room on Decoration Day and Christmas and on his birthday. And I never thought 'twas superstitious to reverence every bit of the picture, frame and all."

"Why, no," said Francis reluctantly, "I don't suppose 'tis, when you come to look at it that way. It can't do any harm to anyone."

Beneath a small blue-and-white statue of the Blessed Virgin on Barbara's bureau was a framed card. Francis was curious to find out just what inscription the card bore. He went closer, and read:

"Most Holy Virgin, in the day of thy glory forget not the sorrows of thy children on earth.

"Have pity on all who suffer and who are in pain.

"Have pity on those who loved and who are parted.

"Have pity on those who are misunderstood, on those who are lonely.

"Have pity on those who are despised and forsaken and who tread thorny pathways along life's way.

"Have pity on all thy loved children, and forget us not when we cry to thee with loving voice.

"O Maria, pray!"

He was touched by the little prayer. Something tugged at his heartstrings. He read the simple invocations over once, twice. He lingered longest on the invocation, "Have pity on those who loved and who are parted."

He felt that Mrs. Forest was standing close beside him, that she too was reading the words. She was struck with keenest anguish, remembering one whose portrait hung in the little parlor below, all wreathed about in a silken flag and who lay sleeping, "somewhere" on a hillside of France.

"Have pity on those who loved, and who are parted."

In the simplicity of her maternal heart, robbed of its dearest treasure, the good old woman wondered whether the Blessed Virgin had not, perhaps, suffered more than other mothers in the world. For, when one stopped to consider, her Son was not only man, but her God. And she had laid Him away in a lonely and dishonored tomb, not indeed torn by shot and shell after a glorious death in the front-line trenches, with loved companions standing by his side, en-

veloped in all the glory of a just cause, but His Sacred Body, formed in hers, was stripped ignominiously of its garments and veiled in the Blood which streamed from more cruel holes than those made by the swift passage of shrapnel. Dead after a lingering death, seemingly inglorious, while those who stood around Him blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, spat upon Him, and opened His adorable side with a lance. Ah, surely there was no comparison between the sacrifice of the mothers of the world and this majestic, forlorn Virgin who stood by the cross of her Son! Stood, did not sink to the earth in her weight of woe, but bravely sustained the sword of anguish while she might comfort Him.

Well, well,—so thought the little old lady—life was strange and difficult to understand. Every day one lived new ideals were unfolded like flowers, disclosing undreamed-of beauty within their waxen chalices, pure gold where one had thought to find only the pollen of a common flower.

Over and over in Mrs. Forest's heart rang the sad refrain of Barbara's prayer to the Sorrowful Virgin: "Have pity on those who loved, and who are parted!"

It did not seem strange after this that

Catholics invoked the powerful Virgin and believed that she heard and answered their prayers.

Francis, absorbed in thought, was recalling a little story which he had read in one of the current magazines. A poor dolt who had been piously brought up in a country village was deemed unfit for the things of books. Vainly did the good Curé strive to instruct him and to fashion him into something which might be of use in the world. The iron clamor of war called this youth with others out from the pleasant fields, away from the village church and far from the good old Curé's side. He followed in the restless footsteps of fanatical leaders who were hurrying to dethrone an unlucky king. War spent its fury. It strewed the streets of Paris with mangled and misshapen forms that had once been men. It hounded from exile leaders who had no greater fault than that they represented a system which to the people was unjust and undesirable. It changed the poor peasant lad from a simple unsophisticated boy, content with the humble things of life, into a fierce and savage man whose yearning was for human blood.

War passed by, and the fury calmed somewhat. The man returned to his native hamlet.

Everything seemed changed. Had he realized, the change was in himself.

He thought that the village had remained behind in the march of so-called progress. War had not penetrated these majestic and kingly forests, these white, sweet-smelling roads. In the village church the sanctuary lamp still flickered as of old. The great change lay in himself.

He went out into the pleasant fields dotted with wild flowers. He did not find any particular enjoyment in the recollections of his boyhood haunts. Coming suddenly to a turn in the hedge, he saw a large crucifix similar to those seen at the entrance to many a French village. Coming suddenly upon it, the Image seemed very real, almost alive.

The man received a rude shock. All the teachings of his childhood returned to his forsaken soul. He had seen men torn by shot and shell, he had seen rivers of human blood, and he had not turned pale. But now the sight of this inanimate figure rent his very soul. His knees shook. Looking up into the disfigured face, he saw that the nail which fastened the right arm had been broken off, eaten by rust. The figure hung suspended only by the left arm.

In his childhood he had not been pious, but he had cherished the crucifix. It wounded his heart

to think that this sacred symbol had suffered neglect at the hands of men. Among the hedgerows he found a piece of clinging vine, strong and pliable as wire. Laying his helmet and sabre on the grass, he reverently climbed up to the cross, refastened the arm of the Divine Martyr to it, kissed the Feet and crept down.

The simple tale had singularly touched Dr. Somers. The sight of Barbara's little Crucifix, embalmed with flowers gathered by those child-like hands in the fields of his childhood, touched him to the heart, although it brought him bitterness. He felt that Barbara was farther than ever away from him because of this.

He followed the little lady down the stairs in silence. Entering the sitting room, he threw himself wearily into a chair and rested his head upon his hands.

Mrs. Forest thought, "How like his mother he is! Poor, dear lady! It was the crudeness of life that weighed on her, that broke her gentle heart. It must have driven her to the Catholic Church at the last; although just why, I don't understand."

The little room seemed to be stifling Francis. The pictures on the walls, shrouded in white mosquito netting, the chairs covered over with flowered cretonne for the summer season, the

many angles of the ancient carpet, and the Venetian gondolas wandering giddily over the wall paper—he remembered them all from early childhood.

The sound of merry laughter struck him forcibly, and he started up. He crossed the room and went to the window that looked out over the orchard.

Barbara was leaning on the garden gate, swinging her sunbonnet. Her cheeks were aglow with roses that put to blush the pale princesses of the garden. She was looking into the eyes of a tall and stalwart young farm hand, who, with flannel shirt slightly opened at the neck and bronze arms resting lightly on the fence, toyed with the blossoms of the honeysuckle.

The little room swung dizzily around Francis. Barbara, he thought, could only look that way at one in whom she was deeply interested. He had not spoken with her since their quarrel on the occasion of his last visit that had ended so unhappily.

David Lester was a Catholic. The advantage was insuperable. He was only a hired man, but he was a giant among men, strong, handsome, noble, singularly gifted in many ways. What did Barbara think of him?

Francis was almost beside himself with misery. He wondered of what the two were talking. For something made David's expression become very pensive, and his long lashes dropped over his sunburned cheek. Barbara had ceased laughing and was speaking very earnestly to him. Of what? Francis would have been surprised to hear the conversation. For the girl was saying in low tones:

"David, did you read the incident of how St. Alphonsus set off for the Indies? The rector, just to test his spirit of obedience, ordered him to go to the Indies one wintry evening. Instantly Alphonsus, although an old man, set off, without hat or cloak. Of course the porter had instructions not to allow him to pass. Oh, David! People to-day would find that ridiculous, perhaps; for, you see, this is an age of 'progress.' But to me it's wonderfully beautiful. It just shows that Alphonsus cared for nothing but to please God. The weather or other circumstances did not enter into his considerations. Are you enjoying reading his life?"

Barbara paused suddenly, as she noticed that Dr. Somers' handsome car was standing outside the cottage door. A faint color came to her lips. She dreaded to meet him just now. She was

terribly afraid of herself, knowing how magnetic he was, and her own weakness.

She turned resolutely toward the cottage door, and left David gazing after her with something akin to reverence.

XVIII

HILLCREST

BARBARA was vaguely uneasy. Francis' last visit on the day when David had taken her for a ride in the old buzz wagon had been far from happy. Mrs. Forest, absenting herself from the sitting room in order to give the young people an opportunity to reach a better understanding, had but made a bad matter worse. Francis had had practically nothing to say, and the girl found herself shy and nervous. So he had gone away, mentally regretting that he had come at all, and vowing to leave Barbara to herself for a couple of weeks in order that she might realize how much she was missing. Mrs. Forest was right in her estimate of the young man. He was seriously afflicted with pride, and hated to give in to others.

Barbara wandered idly through the tiny rooms of the cottage. She touched with her gentle hands many mementos of past generations; for the place abounded in them. She spent

hours curled up in a big rocking chair poring over the family albums. Ever and always it was the same—in the slight, quaint figures of Auntie Forest's brothers and uncles and grandfathers she saw but one figure, that of Francis. The faces all resolved themselves into one face, Francis'. Everything was Francis, although Barbara was furiously angry with herself for caring. Sunday passed and he did not come to Meadow Lane. She was very uneasy. What if he should never come again?

Barbara's nature was one which was easily satisfied with simple pleasures. In this respect she had never quite outgrown her childhood. So now the little old lady, seeing with anxious eyes that the girl was brooding, and rightly connecting it with Francis, tried in every way to divert her.

Barbara sat for hours with the treasures of the little best room in her apron. She looked through stereoscopes and saw beautifully and impossibly colored flowers,—ladies and gentlemen, hoop skirts and stovepipe hats, and so on. She pored over ancient annals of fishing ports where Mrs. Forest's father had lived, and his ancestors before him. She read with feverish interest stories of those who toiled in the deep and brought forth wondrous treasure in

their nets to be divided among the simple villagers. She embroidered diligently on bits of linen or satin, working all kinds of mistakes in her moments of abstraction, and wearying of everything.

Did she tire of the peace and solitude of the country? For the blue meadows stretching away so uniformly made her inexpressibly lonely. The sight of the cows chewing the stems of the clover seemed but to accentuate her uneasiness. She wandered through the fields, caressing the wild flowers, making bouquets for the cottage and for her own little shrines upstairs in the blue-and-white chamber. She wove dainty chaplets of wild roses for the graves of two whom she had never met in life, but who seemed very near to her, especially one of them. Through them she felt the closeness of eternity, and nothing pleased her more than to fancy that the dead were her friends.

Life flowed on too smoothly, as it seemed. Barbara was not one of those restless souls who must be among the crowd and be a part of everything that goes on. And yet she loved the pulse of life, to touch life, to see it and feel it. The chapel at the crest of the hill was a great solace during these trying days. And yet she longed for the dim old churches of the city, for the quiet

aisles sometimes strewn with dust, aisles that echoed now and anon to the tread of hurrying footsteps. She yearned for many things that she had left behind.

Had Barbara been more versed in the things of the heart she might have realized that the city called to her, not so much because of its many colored lights and its fascination, as because someone was there whom she had come to need, and whose presence meant all the world to her. She was angry with Francis sometimes, sometimes angry with herself, and sometimes, with a true woman's fickleness, she loved him the more dearly just because of his strong will and the hardness with which he treated her. But again, like a true little woman, she quickly forgave him, and her moments of depression were succeeded by hours when hope sang in her heart and all the world was fair because of him.

From behind the closed shutters the girl, wandering in the garden, heard the drone of Mrs. Forest's voice as she sang her favorite hymn to the doleful accompaniment of the old melodeon:

Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is drifting away!
Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is sinking to-day!

Barbara smiled in spite of herself. Here in the quiet village there was not much to incite one to wrongdoing. People seemed to vegetate like the grass and the herbs. It was an unvaried round of petty household tasks and duties, while the sun was so golden overhead and the sky like turquoise and the flowers enameled the velvet fields.

Mrs. Forest, behind the closed shutters, in the simplicity of her motherly heart, pleaded for some wanderer on life's vast ocean. Who could tell whether somewhere, in the deep waters of contradiction, a restless drifting soul might not be drawn to safe harbor by the prayer that rose from a simple and trusting heart? Barbara thought: How many there are outside the Faith who would appreciate it much more than those who possess it through no merit of their own! The Church had so much security and peace, so much beauty and sunlight to offer! How many times had she not, in some remote corner of a church, watched with wondering, reverent eyes the tremendous mysteries being celebrated on the altar, where the priest walked to and fro, said a few words in Latin, lifted his hands or joined them, bent his head or raised it to a White Something in his fingers, and murmured the desire of all the world into the wounded Heart of Christ,

the great Lover of mankind. Oh, it was all so wonderful, so beautiful! if only the whole world knew of it! If only just one more soul knew of it! Only—— But Francis seemed to be as far as possible from the Kindly Light of which the great Cardinal wrote in pleading accents.

Barbara wandered by herself down the lonely village street. The low white-washed fences of the farm cottages reached out to a whole wilderness of fragrant blossoms and wistful green things. Now and then some warm, loving, living creature crossed her path, looking up into her face to solicit a smile of recognition or the gentle pressure of her dainty hand. All the living creatures at Meadow Lane knew and trusted Barbara. When they were tired or hungry or thirsty they invariably turned to her if she was at hand. The mother cat would come to deposit her precious burden of fur in Barbara's lap as she sat knitting under the old elm trees. Brutus had unfolded to her alone the secret hiding place of the big ham-bone in the woods behind the farm. Not even David had obtained such singular privileges as the dainty little princess who ruled the hearts of all who came within her gentle influence.

She turned into a shady lane that ran past the old Methodist meeting house on the green. She looked curiously at the grim closed shutters, at

the gaunt porch, at the prim steeple, at the rambling line of sheds in the rear for the horses that had used to travel from a distance on Sunday mornings. Through the windows she glimpsed the bare whitewashed walls, unrelieved by any touch of color or decoration. Truly there was not much beauty in a religion which was embodied in such a lack of all God's beautiful works, the girl thought. Strange that people should strive to exclude this beauty, when, as if to satisfy the desires of His children, God had made such a beautiful world, filling it to the brim with loveliness and delight.

Barbara knew that in this ancient temple Francis had worshiped in his boyhood. Here he had accompanied his gentle and lovely mother on Sundays and listened to dull sermons—for she thought they probably were dull—and threats meted out to those who would not serve. No wonder that Francis was not a religious man. For his sensitive soul adored beauty, and there was little apparent here.

Barbara continued on her way, moving slowly along the pleasant path, putting aside the thickly twining bushes with her slender hands. In a few moments she came to the old Town Landing, and her delighted ears heard the soft lap, lap of the ever-moving waters.

XIX

PARTNERS

SUMMER waned, and came October, Month of the Angels. In the country the leaves here and there took on a gaudy hue. The corn had been stripped from the yielding stalks that now waved jauntily in the breeze. Autumn flowers, hardy and brilliant, succeeded their frailer, fairer sisters in the gardens. A pensive air seemed to brood over the land.

In the city things languid freshened up a bit. The pavements were no longer blistered by strong midsummer suns. Cool east winds sprang up more frequently in the late afternoon, bringing out multitudes of the poor from the tenements to sit upon the sidewalks, the curbings or the fire escapes. The peddlers of coal or vegetables sang lustily as they lumbered through the streets that resounded to the hum of multifarious voices. The great hive of the city hummed with activity.

Doctor Somers walked briskly, drinking in the cool, damp air, as it was wafted from the harbor.

He walked through Blossom Street, picking his way carefully over heaps of straggling babies, the children of the foreign-born of every conceivable nationality.

He had grown slightly paler and thinner, for he was working harder of late. He had not taken a holiday recently to run out to Hillcrest.

He turned from the narrow street that ascended steeply before him and entered an alley. He knocked at the door of a poor dwelling, which was immediately opened by a young woman in mean garments, with a weeping infant in her arms and two emaciated little ones clinging to her skirts.

Francis ascended a dreary flight of crazy stairs and paused on the first landing to knock on one of the doors.

It was opened by a woman whose face was tired and whose dress was humble, although scrupulously neat and clean.

"How's Billy to-day?" asked the doctor.

"Well, Doctor, he's not so well. But he doesn't complain. He's the best little chap in the world, so mild and unselfish. But it's terribly hard to see him lying there in pain."

Billy had been injured by an automobile some two months before, and had just arrived home after a weary sojourn at the hospital. Dr.

Somers had been attending him regularly since his coming home. Billy was just thirteen years old, and a whole world of natural goodness and sweetness about him. Francis sometimes marveled at the quiet self-possession and the heroic spirit of the little lad, who suffered intense pain at times.

They had done everything possible for him. Francis had given himself unreservedly without recompense, for here he recognized a case well deserving of charity. The Willetts were painfully poor; the father was dead and the mother took in washing to eke out the household provision.

Francis had grown very fond of Billy in the space of a few short weeks. So now he went into the small dark chamber overlooking the back alley and bent over the cot with the solicitude of a mother.

Billy, a pathetic little figure with tumbled golden hair, turned a radiant face toward the Doctor. There had come to be a singular bond between these two so dissimilarly placed in the circumstances of life.

"Well, how goes it, Billy?" Dr. Somers asked cheerily. He took up the wasted little hand, that should have been strong and brown as those of other boys of his age.

"Why, Dr. Somers, I'm feeling just fine. I was hoping you'd come to-day."

"Any of that old pain in the back?" inquired Francis.

"Well, yes, some. But it might be worse. And when I lie perfectly still it isn't so bad."

Dr. Somers drew in his breath sharply. He admired the indomitable courage of the little fellow, who would never complain of his sufferings. Even now he would not admit that they were much.

A brief examination, during which Billy maintained a stoical indifference, although Francis knew that it hurt him, showed that there was slight progress, if any. Billy would probably never walk without a crutch. He was such a fine little lad that Francis's heart fairly ached at the thought of the future.

"How is she getting on, Doctor?" inquired the patient.

"Why, Billy, she doesn't get on as fast as we would like. I wonder if we couldn't find another specialist who'd have something different in his mind."

"But," Billy turned on the pillow to look straight into the Doctor's eyes. Francis carefully avoided the look. "But 'twouldn't be any

use, would it? He couldn't do more than you're doing, could he?"

"He might." It was terribly hard to be evasive with such a straightforward little soul. Francis wished that he could lie, lie like anything, so he thought to himself. But Billy would find out, and then . . .

"Well," he replied, "perhaps it's just as well to let things move slowly."

Francis found it exceedingly hard to play the game to the end. The end was, for Billy, condemnation to a fate which would set him apart from the rest of men, from boys of his own age. He would be forced to drag through a useless, inactive existence, scarcely the portion of a man in these racing days of progress. Francis suffered keenly as he sat by the poor little bed pondering on the course to pursue. The actual suffering of the separation from Barbara made him unconsciously more gentle, more tender in his ministrations to those who were in pain.

The poor, tawdry furnishings of the room attracted his attention to-day. Over the mantel, which was draped in bedraggled white lace, was a highly colored representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The face seemed to gaze right at you, through you; the eyes to pierce your very soul. It was a kindly Face, a compassionate

Face, yet a Face which reproached and yearned toward you. Francis saw that the Heart was exposed on the breast and that it was encircled with a crown of thorns and emitted flames of fire at its orifice. . . .

It was the first time that he had seen a representation of the Adorable Heart of the Saviour, vast ocean of mercy, tenderness and loving compassion. He felt that he was alone in the little room and that everything else had suddenly vanished save this unusual picture.

Francis had never before thought of the Heart of the Man-God. The heart was the symbol of the affections, the seat of love, of the virtues, of the passions. When pain or disappointment came to a man, a sword of natural affliction pierced this heart, making itself felt in a natural and physical manner. In moments of violent emotion, as of fear, pleasure, anguish and the like, it was the heart that felt and experienced the depths of feeling.

So the Heart of Jesus had probed the depths of men's unworthy and fickle hearts and in Its own adorable recesses had felt the prick of the sword of indifference, of distrust and of abandonment.

Francis noted that there were printed words

beneath the picture. Stooping forward, he read them.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart."

With hands idly folded, he heard the reproach, the lesson from the recesses of this loving Saviour's heart. Was it true, what the message implied? Was pride indeed the root of all his misery? Was pride the foundation stone of so many months of pain, loneliness and distrust of all men? Something had always been wanting to his complete enjoyment of all his blessings. He had never truly known perfect peace such as this child here by his side, little sufferer, had experienced. What was the reason?

Looking at the wasted form of the boy, Billy, he suddenly felt that the human body participated in the holiness of the soul that gives it life and warmth. And of all the organs of that body, surely the heart participated most intimately in the holiness of the soul. Francis felt that he had come into a very sacred place; that, unworthy though he was, he had been admitted to a sanctuary.

Billy was speaking, and he turned to listen.

"Doctor, I've been thinking of something, just while you've been here. What if——"

Francis shuddered and closed his eyes. He dreaded what was coming.

"What if I should never walk again?"

"Why, Billy, that's not being a brave soldier. Why not look on the jolly side? Why—why——"

"Because," the young earnest face seemed to glow as with a light of some old saint, "because I don't seem to get any stronger. And of course I know that all over the world there are crippled boys. Look at the fellows in the World War! And there are blind people, and deaf and dumb people and people without arms and legs. And God doesn't cure them."

Francis was silent, ashamed that with all his superior knowledge he could offer no solution of the Mystery of Suffering.

He said somewhat harshly, gazing toward the picture on the mantel:

"Why?" For he realized that Billy knew why.

"Because—because—there's something better in store for them," said Billy reverently. "And because, of itself suffering isn't bad. Doctor, if I thought that—— There have been lots of saints, you see, who asked for sufferings. They couldn't bear to be without them."

"Asked for suffering?" asked Francis in a low

voice. "That's odd." He felt very small and insignificant beside this cripple boy from the heart of the slums.

"Yes, asked for it. Lots of them. And some of them asked for martyrdom. Death, you know."

"For martyrdom—death!" Francis sounded to himself like a sorry echo wandering in a maze without sense of place or direction.

"Yes. Right in our own day, too. Say, Doctor, did you ever hear of Father Willie Doyle, of the Society of Jesus? I'm a namesake of his—Bill, you know. I'm mighty glad, too. Well, he was a chaplain in the World War." Billy's pale face glowed with a rosy light. "He was a saint long before he was a martyr, though. He used to rise in the middle of the night and walk two miles barefoot in reparation for the sins of other souls. He used to kneel in the cellar at midnight in order to suffer from the cold. And sometimes he said the beads with his arms extended in the form of a cross. He used to press his heart against the tabernacle door to let Our Lord hear the beats of its love. He was a wonder, I'll say! I'd like to be like him—a hero! What do you think, Doctor? I've got a relic from Holy Ireland. A priest gave it to me after I got run over."

Billy reverently took from a fold of his shirt a tiny piece of leather worked with embroidered edge by some loving and sympathetic hand.

"It's a piece of the pillow Father Willie used in the trenches," he said proudly. "Gee, I'm in luck I guess he didn't sleep much on it, though. I'll say he was my ideal! What do you think, Doctor? When I was so sick, just after the accident, and didn't seem to care whether I got well, I kind of think this relic saved my life."

Francis listened dumbly, wonderingly. Was it absurd, amazing, that he felt a strange inexplicable interest in this young Irish Jesuit, the Passion Flower of Ireland's contribution to the Great War? Francis had never realized that the Catholic Church was so tender, so intimate as these outpourings of a pure boyish heart revealed.

He suddenly remembered Barbara's little Crucifix all embedded in flowers. He felt that he had been cruel, misunderstanding, and that he had caused her gentle heart needless pain. Something like a sob rose in his throat.

"Doctor Somers," said Billy, "I might as well let you in on something before my mother comes in again. You know I'm never going to be any better, don't you?"

"Why," Francis stopped. He could say noth-

ing. He felt that strange mysterious presences filled the stuffy little tenement room. They represented the souls of those who had suffered and sacrificed—for love.

"Doctor," whispered Billy feverishly, "I offered myself as a victim if God willed—like Father Willie did. And I did this for some soul that is wandering in darkness right now."

The little voice died into stillness. Billy, weakened by the extra exertion, lay back on the pillows with faint drops of moisture gathered on his white brow. After a moment he continued:

"The priest who comes over to see me every two weeks brought Father Willie's life for me to read. I've only read a few minutes at a time. I didn't tell even him. Father Foley, I mean. Something told me to tell you. You've been good to me, and I'll never forget it. I only wish I could repay you. But we're awfully poor. Mother has to take in washing to keep things going. Some folks might think it was queer I was satisfied to be laid up when she has to work so hard. But God squares things up. He will take care of us somehow and bring good out of it all."

Francis drew the book from the foot of Billy's bed, and with a feeling that he was treading holy

ground, opened by chance toward the middle. And he read in large black letters:

"Two Solemn Moments.

"The end of that life which God gave to be spent in His service. A solemn moment when we lie down for the last time and look back upon our life which is gone forever—a precious talent entrusted to us, not to misuse or bury in the ground like slothful servants, but to spend to good use till the Master comes.

"The end of a year. Another milestone of our journey to eternity. Just three hundred and sixty-five days of a life so short passed away. All of us have taken a big stride toward the hour of our death and, let us not forget it, the happiness and reward of heaven.

"Last mile of march. Tighten knapsack on back, pull ourselves together and step out more hardily for the last mile. For many the last mile of life. We shall make it worthy of Him so good to us; so that we may exclaim: 'I have fought a good fight,' done my duty to my God. A crown of glory."

And again, on the next page Francis read:

"The Wedding Garment. Find the pond of the Sacred Blood, there to wash stains away. Hell is full of men who said, 'Later on.' To save one's soul or lose it matters much."

"Billy," said Francis almost feverishly, "say, little Buddy, what would you think if we entered into partnership about this thing? Marching to grab that reward, I mean; you with your knapsack, and I with mine? You suffering in one way and I in another. For, Billy, I've got a harder fight than you, all told. You see, Billy, I've passed lots of white milestones and never thought where the way led. I just marched on, high and mighty, proud as—as the devil, Billy boy. And God knows I've suffered for my fault. What do you say about the partnership? Will you sign up? Then we can have some fun watching the enemy. What do you know? I shouldn't wonder if I could finally catch up with —her."

"Catch up with who, Doc?" queried Billy blissfully unconscious of his lapse of grammar.

"With—— Oh—er—— Billy, there's a skeleton in the closet, my boy, that's all. Keep out or you'll get scared to death. Father Willie Doyle was some character, I'll say!" Francis felt strangely boyish since a few moments ago. He lapsed easily into the linguistic characteristics of the day.

Billy was a shrewd little saint, as all the saints were. He thought, "I'll bet it's a girl!"

"Billy," said Francis, as he rose to go, "er——

I suppose I'd better borrow that book of yours just for a couple of days. To—to kind of get my bearings on the line of march, don't you know. You see, Billy, if I'm going to crawl out through the darkness and right into the mouth of shot and shell, I've got to know where the mines are laid. Don't you say so?"

"Sure," said Billy, and saw his beloved book depart with regret, but willing to sacrifice its loved companionship to his new partner.

Dr. Somers went out through the kitchen all redolent with steam from the busy tubs. He talked to the little mother breezily for a few seconds, chucked the baby under the chin and went out into the mellow sunshine from the presence of one of God's truest little saints.

His heart was singularly empty somehow, although he was in comparative peace. Although he could not understand, it was good that it was empty, for now there was more room in his soul for God.

He did not go directly home. Instead he took a turn in the direction of old St. Joseph's. Coming upon the open door just at the turn of the road, he hesitated a moment. Then half fearfully, like a wanderer who returns a prodigal to his father's house, half uncertain of his reception,

he went in and threw himself on his knees beneath the silent watchful lamp.

Francis did not pray consciously in words. He just knelt quietly in the gloaming, and listened to the beating of a Heart behind a little door of gold.

How long he remained so he never knew. But when he left the church the moon was out and a few baby stars blinked far up among the clouds.

He resolutely turned the corner of Allen Street and rang the bell on the rectory door.

A priest was passing through the lower hall as he entered. Francis, with a throb of gratitude, recognized the young priest whom he had met that night of his first visit to old St. Joseph's and who had addressed him in so friendly a manner.

"I—I've come to talk to you about—my mother," Francis stammered.

They went into a private room and closed the door.

XX

THE TOWN LANDING

BARBARA, taking her solitary way along the quiet village street of Hillcrest, passed neat gardens set before prim cottages, old gardens where the tall sunflowers caressed one another, where quaint old ladies nodded to one another over low garden walls, and white fleecy cloudlets drifted almost over the tips of the orchard trees.

She was sorely troubled. She had inquired at the post office whether there was any mail for her. Sometimes Dr. Somers dropped a note or card when he was too busy to come in person. There was no note, no card.

At this rather melancholy season of the year—for the gray days of autumn were approaching—it was easy to look on the gloomy side of things. Everything seemed to be drifting away from Barbara, and she felt very lonely. In another week she was to return to the city to take a position in one of the fashionable modiste shops

at a fair salary. The future looked bright, and yet she was very ill at ease.

The thought of leaving Hillcrest made her shed a few quiet tears now and then when its little mistress was not looking. It was not so much because of the kindness which had been shown to her here, although she was grateful for all. It was more because this charmed spot was inseparably associated with the thought of one who had brought her so much happiness, only to crown it all by misery. The hours spent with him would never be forgotten.

And David. Barbara realized that David meant much to her also, but in another way than Dr. Somers. David had been a big, kind, tactful brother, a guide, a confidant, one whose sympathy had never failed her. She realized that from his earnest Christian example she had imbibed something very noble and sweet. David had helped her, as she in turn had helped him.

Poor David! Rich David! So thought Barbara, almost envying him the peace of soul that, in spite of his loneliness, consoled and enriched him as no other gifts could do.

Bells called to one another through the drowsy twilight. The girl loved the sound of them and paused to listen. In the meadows little singing creatures were flitting busily in the grass, piping

their quaint distinctive notes of rejoicing. Nature was so much at peace! It was only human creatures who were unquiet.

Barbara turned down the little lane that led to the Town Landing, hoping, wishing that she might find David there. Shadows were creeping over the meadow grasses as she picked her way daintily along. The first night dews were falling. The flowers had closed their waxen eyelids, heavy with the beauty of the world, and gone fast asleep.

She came to the brink of the river, Lap, lap—the little ripples talked to her heavy heart with infinite sympathy and understanding. The fragrant bushes, laden with the dying blooms of the year, drooped low to whisper: "We, like fairest hopes are passing, but we shall bloom again next year."

Everything seemed to be wide awake to Barbara's presence, and striving to console her.

David was there. . . .

Bareheaded, with arms folded, he stood looking out toward the sunset, over the darkling expanse of moving water. The dip of paddles came faintly on the wind; the air was musty with odors of thyme and water lilies. It was nature's secret witching hour and this her trysting place.

"O, David!" said Barbara. The sound of her own voice almost frightened her. . . .

David turned quickly. His face brightened.

"Barbara!" he said. "I did not hear you . . . but then, I was thinking. . . . It's a wonderful night, and it seems to me of all spots in the world this must be the most beautiful! Don't you think so?"

"A penny for your thoughts, David! Come! Tell me of what you were thinking just before I spoke and spoiled your lovely dream. . . . For of course you were dreaming. One could hardly help it on such a night and—here."

David's face grew sober. He looked very strong, very noble in his present mood. Evidently something serious had been in his mind a moment before, the reflection of which still rested on his features.

He said: "Barbara, I've got something strange to tell you. That is, it seems strange to me, almost too unreal, too sublime. At first it frightened me. I could not tell—even you. I tried to push it away, but it came again, stronger, giving me no peace. And then, when I finally admitted it, other temptations and misgivings came. . . . But finally I think, I hope—I have conquered them. . . . What would you think—

what would you say, Barbara, if I were to tell you that I——"

The whole world stood still just then, so it seemed to Barbara. . . . The wind in the tree tops died to a whisper and even the birds forgot their song. . . .

"That I had decided to—to offer the rest of my life to God—as St. Alphonsus Rodriguez did, to be a lay brother in his beloved Society . . . that is, if I am accepted. . . . I realize now that it must have been planned for me all along. It was you, though, who made it clear to me. But for you I would perhaps have spent the rest of my days toiling here in the fields, always a little restless and dissatisfied because I had not quite reached my own place. Tell me, Barbara,—that you are glad!"

Barbara's quick tears were the only answer to the question.

David continued in a low voice: "Of course I know there will be times when I shall miss the things I've been used to, the freedom and all that. But I know, too, that I'm going to be very happy by and by. Too happy, perhaps. For I believe that great happiness has its dangers. It's good to suffer at least part of the time. St. Ignatius tells us that."

"David," Barbara said softly: "when you are

in your Own Place, do not forget me in your good prayers. I'm so little and weak, David. I don't know when to trust myself. Just now I'm lonely and discouraged. Soon I'll be going back to the city where perhaps I can drown out the pain in my heart in the noise and bustle. But I'll never, never forget that our friendship—yours and mine—was so beautiful and unspoiled, that nothing ever marred or hurt it in any way. Isn't it strange, David, that we learn so hard that the things we keep just for God are the only things that do not hurt us sometime? They always bring peace and joy, even the recollection of them. While other affections——" She sighed heavily and cast down her eyes.

"I know, Barbara. We all have our own peculiar trials. Sometimes I've wondered if I could be happy without the things that most men prize—a home and a little family of my own. But now I understand that it is a high privilege when God offers us a little portion of His Cross. For me the pain will be loneliness—for a time—Nothing else will be hard. But then, I can think how, in all the great crises of His earthly life, Christ suffered alone. It makes all sweet and easy, even in anticipation. But cheer up! Be a brave girl! Who knows,—perhaps more of the merit of my choice belongs to you rather than to

me? At least a large share is yours. I will never forget you, Barbara. I am sure that something very good is coming to you, too. Perhaps it may be nearer than you think. Do you remember the passage in your beautiful life of St. Alphonsus, where it speaks of the response that he made to one who had undertaken the defense of religion: 'Be of good heart, Señor Viceroy. You are serving a good Lady, who will not fail to repay you both here and in Heaven!' I think that we always obtain some consolation for every little good we do here. I realize it in my own case, and I feel sure that you will in yours."

As David ceased speaking, a footstep sounded along the path leading to the brink of the river.

It was Francis Somers. He flushed when he recognized David, bowed politely and shook hands with Barbara.

He said awkwardly: "I've been very busy of late. Mrs. Forest told me that I'd probably find you here."

Barbara replied sweetly: "I'm sure, Dr. Somers, that you are always very busy—doing good to others. I—we looked for you, didn't we, David? We almost thought that you'd forgotten us."

It was an embarrassing moment for Francis.

He wished that David were just then a thousand miles away.

They talked of commonplace things for a few moments, then Barbara said:

"David has just told me some wonderful news. I'm sure he'll be pleased to tell you, too, so that you may congratulate him." Then, seeing that David was trying to find words to describe his great vocation to one who could hardly be expected to sympathize, Barbara continued: "David is going to be a religious. . . . a Jesuit. . . . isn't it wonderful?"

"I'm going to be God's hired man," David said calmly. "I realize that I won't be of much use to anyone, except to do the chores and the like. . . . But at least I can fill in a little corner somewhere. . . ."

Strange as it seemed to himself, in that moment Francis felt very small, very insignificant beside this simple and unlettered son of the soil. Like a vague presentiment of something learned in childhood at his mother's knee and long since forgotten, came the words that he had read beneath the picture in the home of a little cripple boy: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart!"

Francis held out his hand. "Congratulations!" he said with a fervor that could not be

doubted. "Of course it is all beyond me. . . . I'm too worldly to grasp the principle. . . . But I know it's a big sacrifice . . . and I'm glad there are some men who are willing to make it. . . . Good luck, and I hope you get a lot of happiness out of your new life!"

"Thank you for your good wishes, Dr. Somers," David replied with quiet dignity. "I'm sure you are very kind. Now, if you and Miss Barbara will excuse me, I'll be going back to see if Mrs. Forest needs me for anything."

They watched David's tall figure swinging up the path until it disappeared in the bushes. Then Francis said humbly, drawing Barbara's little hand within his own:

"Barbara, won't you forgive me for all the pain I caused you? I've been a blind fool,—but I see my folly now. It's all plain to me. I have suffered, too, suffered very greatly, for I prize your friendship very highly . . . more than anything else in my life. But I have almost found peace. You are going to be very much surprised when I tell you something. . . ."

And then Francis told her briefly of his little boy saint, Billy, and of his holy namesake, Father Willie Doyle, S.J. "I've been reading Father Willie's wonderful life, Barbara," he said eagerly. "At first I couldn't believe that there

were men like him—on earth—in our day. I couldn't realize that men could long for suffering, even embrace it joyfully, in order to attain a higher degree of Divine Love. Have you read the book? No? Then you will be able to appreciate it, even better than I can—yet. Listen to this. . . . I copied a paragraph for meditation to sort of feed on. . . . I'm trying to absorb it, to steep myself in it . . . and find peace, if such a thing is possible to one so selfish and worldly as I've been. . . ."

Francis read to the wondering girl: "I have had the feeling that since the world is growing so rapidly worse and worse and God has lost His hold, as it were, on the hearts of men, He is looking all the more earnestly and anxiously for big things from those who are faithful to Him still. He cannot, perhaps, gather a large army round His standard, but He wants everyone in it to be a Hero, absolutely and lovingly devoted to Him; if only we could get inside that magic circle of generous souls, I believe there is no grace He would not give us to help on the work He has so much at heart, our personal sanctification."

"I never thought there was anything so beautiful in life," Francis said earnestly, as he folded the bit of paper and replaced it carefully in his pocket. "Why is it, Barbara, that God leaves so

many souls in the dark, and for so long, while to others, like David Lester, He clearly shows the whole beautiful design of life's tapestry, each color and pattern in its own place? It's His mysterious way, I suppose, and some day we shall know."

Barbara flushed with joy. She recalled another day when this same young man before her had poured forth his sentiments in far different strain. Like an eager little bird, she fluttered nearer to him, peering into his face while she strove to make out the tremendous mystery. This young man was surely a miracle of Divine Grace!

"I'll say that Father Willie was a wonderful man," Francis went on enthusiastically. "He has changed my whole outlook on life. What would you say if I told you that I sat up one whole night reading the book, and could hardly lay it down until I had finished the last account of him. . . . lying somewhere near the Cross Roads of Frezenburg, waiting, with his boys of the 48th Brigade, for the Great Reveille!

"Oh, it's a wonderful thing to one who has been all wrapped up in self, gloomy and cynical, to come out into the sunlight of a soul like this! I can understand now how the whole world loves and reverences a Saint! And I feel that I

understand more clearly, how God is calling me to follow where He leads, without questioning or hesitation: 'Quid ad te? Tu Me sequere!' And so, Barbara, I shall try to follow.

"I'm going to take instructions from a young priest at old St. Joseph's in the West End," Francis continued. "It was he who first showed me a kindness when one night I had strayed through morbid curiosity into the basement. Of course many things will be hard. But, like Father Willie and my little crippled Bill—I'm going to fight bravely!"

Just then, close to their heads, a little bird burst forth into a perfect paroxysm of song. He sang until it seemed as if the delicate throat must burst with the mightiness of the effort. It was just like a great Te Deum there in the lovely temple of the outdoor world.

The light wind wafted a scent of fragrance to the two standing side by side in the meadow. The sound of the restless water, sucking among the green rushes, was like the low incessant song of some tiny living creature.

Francis, manlike, was absorbed in his new-found happiness, dreaming of the future and new joys of soul and intellect which it should unfold. . . . Beyond that he had no immediate thought.

And Barbara: Sharing as only a pure and self-sacrificing soul can share in the resurrection of one near and dear to her, forgetful of self and unmindful of the destiny that might lie ahead . . . her cup of happiness seemed full. And whether, in the distant years, her way might lie close beside that of the young man beside her, and in the joys of human love she might receive a little foretaste of the joys of those who are reunited in Heaven,—or whether the unfolding of the Infinite plans might yet point a more perfect way of renunciation for her beloved,—in the perfect bliss of the present moment, Barbara resigned all solicitude, even all desire. It was the old sweet abnegation of St. Alphonsus: "I am coming, Lord!"

So Barbara and Francis stood at the river's marge gazing into the distance in perfect tranquillity. And as they stood, a shadowy canoe darted out from beneath the drooping willows. Bravely silhouetted against the farther shore, the little craft bore swiftly on their course two solitary figures into the sunset.

THE END

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